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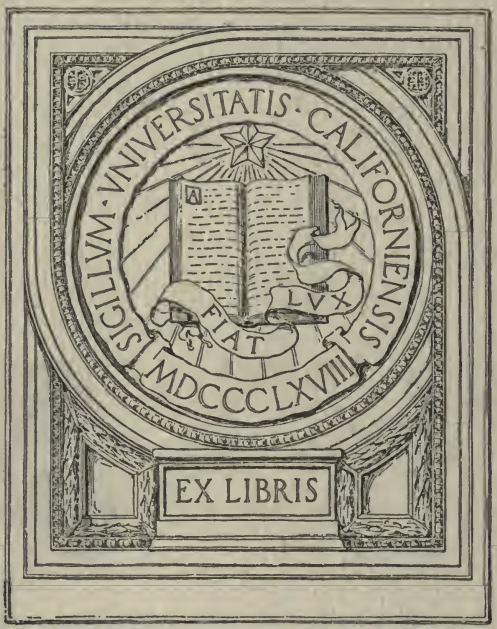
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HUBERT HENRY DAVIES

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MRS. GORRINGE'S NECKLACE

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MRS. GORRINGE'S NECKLACE

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

By HUBERT HENRY DAVIES

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BOSTON
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MRS. GORRINGE'S NECKLACE

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MRS. GORRINGE'S NECKLACE

CAST OF CHARACTERS

CAPTAIN MOWBRAY, *retired*
COLONEL JARDINE, *retired*
LIEUTENANT DAVID CAIRN
MR. JERNIGAN, *a detective inspector*
CHARLES, *a footman*
MRS. JARDINE
ISABEL KIRKE } *her daughters*
VICKY JARDINE }
MISS POTTS
MRS. GORRINGE

The scene of the play is laid in the library in Colonel Jardine's house.

The following is a copy of the play-bill of the original performance.

Wyndham's Theatre

Tuesday, May 12th, 1903, and every evening at 8.45 will be presented

A NEW AND ORIGINAL PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

ENTITLED

Mrs. Gorringe's Necklace

By HUBERT HENRY DAVIES

Captain Mowbray, *retired*	*Charles Wyndham*
Colonel Jardine, *retired*	*Mr. Alfred Bishop*
Lieutenant David Cairn	*Mr. Leslie Faber*
Mr. Jernigan, *a detective inspector*	*Mr. Eille Norwood*
Charles, *a footman*	*Mr. Reginald Walter*
Mrs. Jardine	*Miss Marie Illington*
Isabel Kirke, Vicky Jardine } *her daughters*	*Miss Mabel Terry-Lewis*, *Miss Lettice Fairfax*
Miss Potts	*Miss Ethel Marryat*
and	
Mrs. Gorringe	*Miss Mary Moore*

The scene of the play is laid in the Library in Colonel Jardine's House.

The action takes place near a Garrison Town at a little distance from London, and covers a period of about twenty hours.

MRS. GORRINGE'S NECKLACE

THE FIRST ACT

SCENE.— *The library of* COLONEL JARDINE'S *house, situated near a garrison town in the south of England. The library is much used by all the family as a sitting-room. Opposite the audience there is a French window affording a view of a large well-kept garden. On one side of the stage there is a fireplace, and in the wall opposite, a door. There is an electric bell beside the fireplace and a switch for turning on the electric light beside the door. The room is well furnished with bookshelves, a large writing table, two or three smaller tables, a sofa, chairs, etc., etc., presenting a comfortable and homelike appearance.*

Near the fireplace, and in full view of the whole audience, there is an ornamental bowl, standing on a high pedestal and containing a flowering plant. It is the late afternoon of a summer day.

MRS. JARDINE, *a well-dressed, middle-aged woman, is lying asleep on the sofa.*

Enter MRS. GORRINGE, *a younger woman, always elaborately but never vulgarly dressed. She wears a handsome house dress and no hat. She appears restless and preoccupied all through her scene with* MRS. JARDINE. *When* MRS. GORRINGE *closes the door,* MRS. JARDINE *wakes with a start, blinks and looks up without taking her feet down.*

MRS. JARDINE.

Oh! Is that you, Mrs. Gorringe?

MRS. GORRINGE.

I hope I haven't disturbed you.

MRS. JARDINE.

No. It must be about my waking-up time.

MRS. GORRINGE.

It's after five.

MRS. JARDINE.

Then they'll be home soon. I thought you had all gone to watch the polo.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes, but I left the ground early. [*Sits and gazes at the fireplace.*]

MRS. JARDINE.

How was the game going?

MRS. GORRINGE.

I don't know. As soon as anyone explains to me how the score stands, they always go and change the board.

MRS. JARDINE.

Was anyone hurt?

MRS. GORRINGE.

No.

MRS. JARDINE.

That's a mercy. Every time they play, I have visions of my husband being borne home mangled on a shutter. I was so wrought up over the idea this afternoon, it took me several minutes to drop asleep.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Colonel Jardine was umpiring to-day.

MRS. JARDINE.

Oh, yes. Who played for our side?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Captain Mowbray, and Mr. What's-his-name, and that Mr. Thingamy with the white eyelashes and someone else — I forgot who.

MRS. JARDINE.

Sounds like a very strong team. I suppose Captain Mowbray carried all before him as usual.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Gazing at the fireplace, and not attending.*] Yes.

MRS. JARDINE.

I'm glad Isabel was there to see his triumph. I really believe he's been in love with her ever since he first met her, when he came home a few years ago. And now that he has made this enormous fortune in South Africa, I see no obstacle to a marriage. There used to be some goings-on between Isabel and David Cairn, but I hope that's all blown over. He has no money, you see, so of course it's no good — [*Looks towards* MRS. GORRINGE *and sees she is not attending.*] I'm afraid I bore you.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Starts and turns to her.*] Oh, no, indeed — you talk so interestingly about polo.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Surprised.*] Polo? What's the matter, dear; aren't you well?

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Nervously.*] I'm a little upset. In fact — very much upset. I've lost something.

MRS. JARDINE.

Oh?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes — a — a — diamond necklace.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*In consternation.*] A diamond necklace!

MRS. GORRINGE.

With a pearl clasp.

MRS. JARDINE.

But how — How could it have happened?

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Rises.*] I don't know. I can't think. [*Speaks volubly as she moves about describing the scene.*] I went to my room when I came in. You know how the dressing-table stands — as if it were there. [*Points to a table.*] And the door of course is like this. [*Indicates the door, goes towards it, opens it, goes just outside and then comes in again.*] Well, I came in at the door just as I'm coming in now. Of course I had my hat on. I closed the door. [*Closes the door and walks towards the imaginary dressing-table, talking all the time.*] Then I crossed over to the dressing-table in quite an ordinary manner. Just as I'm doing now. [*Stands before the imaginary dressing-table.*] Well, I looked into my jewel-case.

I wanted to get some rings. These rings, in fact. [*Bends her hand to show her rings.*] I thought it looked different from usual. I couldn't think what it was at first, but I remember saying to myself, "Well, that's funny!" Then all at once it flashed across me and I clasped my hands and exclaimed — [*clasps her hands dramatically*] "Great heavens, my diamond necklace has gone!" [*Drops the dramatic pose and tone.*] Just like that.

MRS. JARDINE.

What a terrible situation for *me*. To think it should be lost in *my* house.

MRS. GORRINGE.

My necklace.

MRS. JARDINE.

It must be one of the servants. We haven't had Pipkin long, and she's always looking out of the window. I shouldn't wonder if *she* stole it. [MRS. JARDINE'S *attention is attracted to the window as* ISABEL, VICKY *and* MISS POTTS *pass without, dressed in their outdoor clothes.* ISABEL *is a handsome, independent girl of twenty-five;* VICKY *a giddy creature of fifteen with a plait coming undone.* MISS POTTS *an unimportant spinster.*] Here are the girls. Don't say a word about it.

MRS. GORRINGE.

No. It's better not. I told my maid to stay in

my room and guard the rest of my jewels. [*Sits, gazing in front of her, and sighs.*]

[ISABEL *enters, followed by* VICKY *and* MISS POTTS.

ISABEL.

[*Coming forward as she speaks.*] We've brought Miss Potts to tea. [*Rings the bell beside the fireplace.*]

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Shaking hands with* MISS POTTS.] Did you enjoy the polo?

MISS POTTS.

Oh, exceedingly.

ISABEL.

We won. Four to three.

MRS. JARDINE.

Hurrah!

[MRS. JARDINE *and* MISS POTTS *sit on the sofa conversing together.*

VICKY.

And we had such fun coming home. We all squashed into the cart and sat on each other's laps.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Remonstrating.*] Oh, Vicky, dear.

VICKY.

Not Isabel. [*With meaning.*] David wasn't there.

ISABEL.

Vicky, don't you think you'd better go and do your hair? It looks as if you'd been sweeping the field with it.

VICKY.

Will you do it, Mrs. Gorringe?

[*Produces a ribbon from her pocket and gives it to* MRS. GORRINGE *as she speaks.* MRS. GORRINGE *starts from a reverie when addressed.* VICKY *kneels beside* MRS. GORRINGE'S *chair while she plaits her hair and whispers to her.*

MISS POTTS *and* VICKY.

[*Together.*] Oh! Lor!

[*They both turn to* ISABEL.

MISS POTTS *and* VICKY.

[*Together.*] Isabel, Mrs. Gorringe has lost her diamond necklace.

MRS. JARDINE, MRS. GORRINGE and ISABEL.

[*Sharply together.*] Sh!

[*They say "Sh!" because* CHARLES, *a young footman, enters with a tea-tray. As they say "Sh!"* MRS. JARDINE *seizes*

MISS POTTS *so suddenly by the arm that she utters a little scream, while* MRS. GORRINGE *pulls* VICKY *back by her plait. They remain silent, watching* CHARLES *as he arranges the tea-table. As soon as* CHARLES *goes out they all begin talking at once until* CHARLES *returns with a teapot, which he places upon the table. There is dead silence from the moment* CHARLES *enters until he goes out again, closing the door after him. Then* ISABEL *speaks.*

ISABEL.

Your diamond necklace?

MRS. GORRINGE.

With the pearl clasp.

ISABEL.

How very dreadful.

MRS. JARDINE.

We aren't saying anything about it at present.

ISABEL.

How very silly.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Is it? I don't know what we really ought to do; you see, I never lost anything of any value before I came to stay with *you.*

MRS. JARDINE.

And we never lost anything at all before *you* came to stay with us.

MRS. GORRINGE.

If Pipkin really stole it —

ISABEL.

[*Interrupting* MRS. GORRINGE.] Who says Pipkin stole it?

[MRS. GORRINGE *looks at* MRS. JARDINE.

MRS. JARDINE.

I only said she *might* have done. You know she *is* always looking out of the windows, and she lived with a French family before she came to us.

VICKY.

[*Giggling.*] Oh, isn't that just like mother?

ISABEL.

[*Pausing as she makes the tea to say thoughtfully.*] That's rather queer. [*They look towards* ISABEL.] Do you remember that story Captain Mowbray told at luncheon yesterday about a man who stole a woman's bracelet and had it copied in paste?

VICKY.

Oh, yes, and she never knew the difference.

MRS. JARDINE.

He lived on the bracelet for years.

MISS POTTS.

The villain!

VICKY.

And she'd never have found out, only he confessed on his death bed.

MISS POTTS.

How very singular.

ISABEL.

Whenever he wanted money he took a diamond from the setting and sold it.

VICKY.

How he must have hurt his nails.

MRS. JARDINE.

Don't be silly.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Plaintively.*] But what's all that got to do with my necklace?

ISABEL.

One can't help recalling it now because, you know, you said you hoped nothing like that would

happen to *you,* and that you always leave your jewel-cases lying about on your dressing-table.

MRS. JARDINE.

Yes, I remember thinking at the time how foolish it was of Mrs. Gorringe to say that.

MRS. GORRINGE.

I thought I was quite safe to say it *here.* Let me see. Who was at luncheon yesterday?

ISABEL.

We were all there.

MISS POTTS.

[*Emphatically.*] *I* wasn't. I assure you this is all news to me.

VICKY.

[*Giggling.*] Poor Potty, she thinks we suspect *her.*

ISABEL.

[*Seriously to* VICKY.] This isn't a joke.

MRS. GORRINGE.

No.

ISABEL.

I mean all the family and the people staying here, Mrs. Gorringe, Captain Mowbray and David.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*With sudden excitement.*] And Pipkin was waiting at table.

ISABEL.

No, mother, Charles was.

MRS. JARDINE.

The same thing. He's probably in love with her — she has quite a tolerable figure. And I bet you anything you like he went straight from the table and told her.

ISABEL.

You've no right to accuse the servants in that general way.

MRS. JARDINE.

Well — what else would you do?

ISABEL.

Send for a detective.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Of course. [*Rising and going eagerly towards* ISABEL.] And I'll run down to the Post Office and give them a description of my necklace.

ISABEL.

Why the Post Office?

MRS. GORRINGE.

I thought that was the kind of place one would go to in a case of this sort.

[COLONEL JARDINE *is heard talking and laughing boisterously without.*

COLONEL JARDINE.

By jove, Mowbray, I never saw you in better form. Ha — Ha — Ha —!

MRS. JARDINE.

Your father! All sit down and pretend nothing has happened.

[*They all sit down with the exception of* MRS. GORRINGE.

MRS. GORRINGE.

If we pretend nothing has happened I shall never get my necklace back.

MRS. JARDINE.

Hush!

[MRS. GORRINGE *sits down reluctantly.*

MISS POTTS.

I think I should tell Colonel Jardine.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes.

MRS. JARDINE.

Not till after dinner. That's the best time to tell him things. His temper's so uncertain.

[COLONEL JARDINE *is again heard laughing without.*

VICKY.

He sounds in a good temper now.

MRS. JARDINE.

His good tempers are more trying to put up with than his bad ones.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Without, laughing boisterously as he speaks.*] By jove, yes. Hottest finish I ever saw.

[COLONEL JARDINE *enters explosively. He is a rubicund, excitable, middle-aged man. He wears plain riding clothes. When he speaks,* MRS. JARDINE *lays her cup on her lap, closes her eyes and contracts her face as if in intense suffering.*

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Rubbing his hands together.*] Well, well, well. We beat 'em — four to three. Close score, eh, girls? [*Claps his hands together and laughs, pokes* MRS. JARDINE *in the back.*] D'you hear that, mother — four to three?

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Bows her head, her eyes still closed as if suffering.*] I hear.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Shaking hands with* MISS POTTS.] How d'you do, Miss Potts? You saw the game. As I was just saying to Mowbray, "Hottest finish I ever saw."

MRS. JARDINE.

[*As before.*] We heard you.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Mowbray saved the day. We put him on the last minute, when David didn't turn up. Shot three goals himself. I believe he would have shot another, but just then the bell went — [*Imitating gong.*] "Wang-wang-wang-wang-wang!"

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Putting her fingers in her ears, exclaims loudly.*] Christopher! Please confine yourself to speech and laughter.

ISABEL.

Tea, father?

COLONEL JARDINE.

Tea, tea, tea? Yes. Give us some tea. [*Turning to the tea-table, he faces* MRS. GORRINGE.]

Why, Mrs. Gorringe, what's the matter? You look as doleful as I don't know what.

MRS. GORRINGE.

So would you. [*To* ISABEL.] I'll go and put on my hat and wait for you in the hall.

ISABEL.

All right.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*To* MRS. GORRINGE, *as she goes towards the door.*] Are you going to send the h'm h'm about the h'm h'm?

MRS. GORRINGE.

H'm h'm.

COLONEL JARDINE.

What's h'm h'm and h'm h'm?

MRS. JARDINE.

Something you don't know about. Don't tell him, girls.

COLONEL JARDINE.

I insist on knowing. I won't have this talking in hieroglyphics before me.

ISABEL.

He'll have to be told soon.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Told, told what?

MRS. JARDINE, MISS POTTS, ISABEL and VICKY.

[*Together.*] Mrs. Gorringe has lost her diamond necklace.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Speaking with the others.*] I've lost my diamond necklace.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Unable to hear a word.*] What! Don't all shout at me like that.

MRS. GORRINGE.

My diamond necklace —

COLONEL JARDINE.

Well — well. What about it?

MRS. GORRINGE.

It's lost.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Excitably.*] The devil it is. By Jove! Something must be done.

ISABEL.

[*Comes to* COLONEL JARDINE, *lays her hand on his arm and says quietly.*] We are going to wire to Scotland Yard. [*To* MRS. GORRINGE.] We might write the telegram here.

[*Takes a sheet of paper from the paper-rack*

and a pencil from the pen-tray and lays them on the writing-table. MRS. GORRINGE *sits down and writes.* MISS POTTS *rises and takes leave of* MRS. JARDINE.

VICKY.

Going, Potty?

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Sharply.*] Vicky, don't be impertinent.

VICKY.

I'll go with you.

ISABEL.

Now Vicky and everybody, please don't tell anyone we are going to have a detective in the house. The servants aren't to know who he is.

MRS. JARDINE.

Especially Pipkin.

VICKY.

All right. Come on, Potty.

MRS. JARDINE.

Vicky!

[VICKY *and* MISS POTTS *go out.*

ISABEL.

Is your telegram ready, Mrs. Gorringe?

MRS. GORRINGE.

How will this do? [*Looks round at the others before she begins to read gravely, in a clear, high voice.*] "Lost, a beautiful diamond necklace. Five large drops in front. One pearl clasp behind." [ISABEL *goes into a fit of laughter and turns away.* MRS. GORRINGE *looks at her in surprise.*] What's the matter with it?

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Fussily.*] You don't need so many words. See. Let me cross some of them out. [*He signs to* MRS. GORRINGE *to get out of her chair and let him sit there. She rises and stands beside him, watching him as he hastily crosses out words.*] Say, "Lost, beautiful diamond necklace!" You don't need to say "a" beautiful diamond necklace. Never use the articles "a," "an" and "the" in a telegram. You don't even need "beautiful" or "diamond." [*Crossing out words.*] Just say, "Lost necklace."

MRS. GORRINGE.

But they might think it was nothing but a string of imitation pearls, and that wouldn't be worth sending a detective for.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Well, leave "diamond" in if you like. [*Puzzling over paper.*] What's the next? I can't read your writing.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Bends over him.*] "Five large drops in front."

COLONEL JARDINE.

You can save three words there. Just say "Drops front" and — [*Pouncing on words with his pencil and crossing them out.*] "Clasp behind."

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Watching them with contempt from her chair.*] If they know anything at all at Scotland Yard they'll know the clasp wouldn't be in front and the drops behind.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Yes, that's true. We can save two more words. [*Crossing out words.*] Just say — "Drops — clasp."

MRS. JARDINE.

That's not sense.

MRS. GORRINGE.

No. That's what *I* think.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Getting confused between them.*] Well, just say "Drops front, clasp hind."

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Snapping him up.*] Hind! Hind isn't a word.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Getting angry.*] You're getting me so mixed up I don't know what I'm doing. [*Puzzles over the telegram.*]

MRS. JARDINE.

Well, send them something they can understand. I'm sure I shouldn't know what to make of it if I received a telegram that said "Drops front — clasp hind." I should suppose Front and Hind were two men, shouldn't you, Mrs. Gorringe?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes, I should.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Angrily.*] Oh, well, if you think you can do it better yourself. [*Rises, throws his pencil on the table, muttering as he goes towards the door.*] What's the good of trying to be business-like with a pack of women?

[COLONEL JARDINE *goes out fuming.*

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Nearly crying as she looks at the ruins of her telegram.*] Oh, isn't it too bad? And the thief may be bargaining with the pawnbroker at this very moment, and here's my telegram worse than not begun.

[ISABEL *takes the pencil, turns the paper over, scribbles a few words and then gives the paper to* MRS. GORRINGE.

ISABEL.

Let us go and send that.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Reading the paper.*] But you've said nothing about my necklace.

ISABEL.

It's so unnecessary.

[CAPTAIN MOWBRAY *enters. He is a strong, self-reliant man, about forty-five, grizzled and tanned with hard out-door life.*

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*All smiles.*] Oh. Here's Captain Mowbray.

MRS. JARDINE.

Captain Mowbray! Isabel shall give you tea before she goes and sends the — [*to* ISABEL] you know what.

MOWBRAY.

[*Smiling at* ISABEL.] Yes, do stay and give me tea before you go and send the — *you* know what, *I* don't.

ISABEL.

[*Regretfully.*] I'm sorry, but it's very urgent.

MOWBRAY.

I'm sorry.

MRS. GORRINGE.

But still, there is no need for us both to go, is there, Isabel?

ISABEL.

[*Intending to stay, and offering the telegram to* MRS. GORRINGE.] No.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Sweetly, to* MOWBRAY.] So *I'll* stay and give you your tea.

[*Seats herself at the tea-table and begins to make* CAPTAIN MOWBRAY'S *tea.* ISABEL *looks annoyed a moment, then goes out with the telegram.*

MRS. GORRINGE.

I feel so relieved now my telegram has nearly started.

MRS. JARDINE.

You'd better be careful, Mrs. Gorringe, or you'll let the cat out of the bag.

[MRS. JARDINE *goes out.*

MOWBRAY.

[*Sitting at the tea-table with* MRS. GORRINGE.] Have you got a secret, Mrs. Gorringe?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes. Does that make me very interesting?

MOWBRAY.

Not unless you tell it.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Pretending to be annoyed.*] Oh. How ungallant you are.

MOWBRAY.

To suggest you don't need a secret to make you interesting?

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Smiling with pleasure at the compliment.*] Now, Captain Mowbray, I believe you're making fun of me. It's very naughty of you. [*Giving him his tea.*] There! [*Archly.*] You don't deserve it.

MOWBRAY.

Aren't you going to give me something with it?

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Smiles and drops her eyes.*] How dare you!

MOWBRAY.

I mean to eat.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Slightly confused at her mistake.*] Oh. [*Offers him cake and bread-and-butter with both hands.*] Cake or bread-and-butter?

MOWBRAY.

Cake, please. [*Puts out his hand to take a piece of cake.*]

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Playfully snatching the cake plate away and offering him only the bread-and-butter.*] No, you must have bread-and-butter. Good little boys always begin their tea with a piece of bread-and-butter.

MOWBRAY.

[*Taking bread-and-butter.*] I'm so hungry, I'll take what I can get.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Relenting, offers him the cake and says in*

baby language.] Poo' ickle sing. Then it s'all have its cake. [*Lays down the plates*]. Now, I'm not going to let you talk any more nonsense. [*Turns seriously to him.*] Tell me all about yourself.

MOWBRAY.

All?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes. Begin at the beginning.

MOWBRAY.

Well — in the first place — I was born — shall we say — forty-two years ago?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Oh. Just Mr. Gorringe's age. Go on.

MOWBRAY.

Do you want the poor but honest parents?

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Coquettishly.*] Now, you're making fun again. I shall get up and go out of the room if you aren't sensible. [*Seriously.*] I want to hear about your travels and experiences. It seems to me as if your life must have been quite a panorama of romances and adventures.

MOWBRAY.

I suppose I have knocked about a good bit.

MRS. GORRINGE.

I judged so from things I've heard you drop at meals.

MOWBRAY.

[*Protesting humourously.*] I never drop things at meals.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Playfully threatening to slap him.*] Oh, now, I mean remarks, silly.

MOWBRAY.

Oh.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Resting her cheek on her hand, and looking at him with serious interest.*] You know, I could picture you in a storm at sea — standing dauntlessly on the poop — or single-handed cutting your way through an army of Dervishes with the colours, or rescuing a Spanish girl or — things of that sort.

MOWBRAY.

[*Amused.*] You'll make me feel quite a hero if you go on.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Making eyes at him.*] *I* think you are a hero.

MOWBRAY.

Oh, dear no. I've always been a most ordinary

person. I went into the Army because my father did. I left because it cost too much. I went to South Africa because I couldn't think of anywhere else to go. I made a fortune because I had good luck. You can't make a hero out of that.

MRS. GORRINGE.

When the war broke out you offered to lay down your life for your country.

MOWBRAY.

Oh, well — you see I happened to be on the spot and I knew the country and that sort of thing, so I wrote to the War Office and asked them if they wanted me.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes. Well, now tell me about the women.

MOWBRAY.

[*Surprised at her abrupt change.*] What women?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Which do you like the best — foreigners or us?

MOWBRAY.

I like women individually — not geographically.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Of course, but I never can see how an English-

man could bring himself to fall in love with a brown woman.

MOWBRAY.

If we're talking of love — [*Pauses.*]

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Seizing her chance.*] Now I suppose you are going to tell me *you* are in love.

MOWBRAY.

[*Seriously.*] Have you noticed it?

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Archly.*] With someone you met in this house, no doubt.

MOWBRAY.

You *have* noticed it.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Smiling coyly.*] Wretch.

MOWBRAY.

Has *she?*

MRS. GORRINGE.

Don't be absurd.

MOWBRAY.

Do tell me.

MRS. GORRINGE.

I shan't. [*Enter* COLONEL *and* MRS. JARDINE. MRS. GORRINGE *is visibly annoyed with this interruption and says under her breath.*] Bother!

MRS. JARDINE.

Still here, Mrs. Gorringe? We are going to take a turn in the garden before we dress for dinner.

MRS. GORRINGE.

That *will* be nice. [*Rises and goes to* MRS. JARDINE.] Captain Mowbray has been telling me such interesting stories — all about his life in South Africa.

MOWBRAY.

Mrs. Gorringe was trying to make me out a hero, so I had to confess I'm really only an adventurer.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Laughing.*] Come, come, come! That's a pretty name to call yourself.

[COLONEL JARDINE *and* CAPTAIN MOWBRAY *converse together.*

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Glances at* CAPTAIN MOWBRAY, *then drops her voice to speak to* MRS. GORRINGE.] Did he say anything about his passion?

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Coyly.*] How did you guess?

MRS. JARDINE.

From the way he looked at her when she went out.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Puzzled.*] Who?

MRS. JARDINE.

Surely you noticed. He's over head and ears in love with Isabel.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Oh, indeed. If you think that I'm afraid you'll find yourself very much mistaken.

[MRS. GORRINGE *goes out.*

MOWBRAY.

[*Calling off from the open window.*] David! We're in here!

[DAVID CAIRN *enters. He is a handsome young officer about twenty-seven. His demeanour is depressed, though he tries to conceal this under an off-hand manner.*

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Fussily.*] O, David, why didn't you turn up for polo?

DAVID.

I missed my train.

COLONEL JARDINE.

You ought to have wired.

DAVID.

Yes. I didn't think of it. And I knew — [*indicating Mowbray*] Frank would play if I didn't turn up.

COLONEL JARDINE.

That doesn't excuse you.

MOWBRAY.

[*Good-naturedly.*] Let him off this time, Colonel. I suppose he has a lot of things to attend to before he sails.

DAVID.

Yes, and we never know what day we may get our marching orders.

COLONEL JARDINE.

I know. I know. But when you went to London yesterday you said you'd come back to-day by the two o'clock train.

DAVID.

I told you I missed it.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Have you just come now by the five o'clock?

DAVID.

Yes.

MRS. JARDINE.

I really don't think it's of so much importance how many trains he missed.

COLONEL JARDINE.

But still he ought to have wired. It doesn't take long to write a telegram — if you don't have a lot of women buzzing round you.

[COLONEL *and* MRS. JARDINE *go out into the garden.* DAVID *sits at the tea-table and helps himself to tea during the following scene.*

DAVID.

I say, who was that girl watching the polo with Isabel and Vicky?

MOWBRAY.

A Miss Potts. Why?

DAVID.

Oh. I thought it looked like someone else.

MOWBRAY.

[*Puzzled.*] Looked? How did *you* see her? I thought you'd only just come from the station.

DAVID.

[*Confused.*] Yes, but I saw them for a minute — from a distance — on my way up.

MOWBRAY.

I don't see how you could possibly have seen them from anywhere between the station and the house. You can only just see the polo ground from the upstairs windows.

DAVID.

I was in my room for a minute — just now. That's how I saw them.

MOWBRAY.

But we'd finished playing more than half an hour before your train came in. You said you'd come by the five o'clock.

DAVID.

Yes, but — I made a mistake.

MOWBRAY.

I do wish you'd learn to be straightforward.

[*He emphasizes this remark by clapping* DAVID *on the shoulder.* DAVID, *in his nervousness, lifting his cup to his lips, spills some tea on his knee.*

DAVID.

Damn it, I've spilt my tea — I haven't a handkerchief.

[*Feels for a handkerchief, and finds he hasn't one.* MOWBRAY *hands him his.* DAVID *scrubs his knee with it as* MOWBRAY *speaks.*

MOWBRAY.

You never seem to think it matters if you fib or not, if it saves you the trouble of a little explanation. Really, old man, it won't do. There, I'm not going to preach to you again.

[CHARLES, *the footman, enters to clear away the tea things.* MOWBRAY *lights a cigarette.*

DAVID.

[*To* CHARLES] All right, I've finished. [*Looking at the handkerchief as he goes towards* MOWBRAY.] I've made rather a mess of it. I'll put it in my wash. [*Puts handkerchief in his pocket. He has no ulterior motive in doing this.* CHARLES *goes out, having cleared away the tea things.*]

MOWBRAY.

David, I need a confidant.

DAVID.

Well.

MOWBRAY.

Now look interested.

DAVID.

I *am* — awfully interested.

MOWBRAY.

You see, I've finished fighting and knocking about, and I've made my pile, and I think it's getting about time I settled down.

DAVID.

And married?

MOWBRAY.

Bright boy.

DAVID.

Who?

MOWBRAY.

You're not as bright as Mrs. Gorringe. She said she'd noticed it at once. And I thought I'd displayed such wonderful reserve. We always do, you know.

DAVID.

I've noticed that you seem rather fond of being with — a certain person.

MOWBRAY.

A certain Miss — ?

DAVID.

Isabel.

MOWBRAY.

[*Smiling.*] Isabel! I wonder how soon *I* shall call her Isabel. I really think she rather likes me, don't you?

DAVID.

I know she likes you very much, but I don't know that it's anything more.

MOWBRAY.

Well, my dear fellow, I don't see how *you* should know. It's what *I've* got to find out.

DAVID.

I wouldn't say anything yet.

MOWBRAY.

[*A little surprised and amused.*] Why not?

DAVID.

Because — I wouldn't.

MOWBRAY.

But I feel in great form for saying something now, — since Mrs. Gorringe made me out such a hero. And if you've noticed, and Mrs. Gorringe has noticed, she must have noticed herself. [*Sees* ISABEL *from the window.*] By jove, there she is!

DAVID.

[*Uneasily.*] But, Frank, I really don't think this is a good moment.

MOWBRAY.

Rubbish, David; it's an ideal moment. Getting dusk; everybody out of the way till dinner — except you, — can't you get out of the way till dinner-time?

[ISABEL *enters.*

ISABEL.

David! Do you mind ordering the cart to meet the seven twenty-five? The new groom is so stupid, he never gets a message right, or I wouldn't ask you to do it.

DAVID.

That's all right. [*He hesitates.*]

ISABEL.

Now, please, or he'll have gone home.

[DAVID *looks at* MOWBRAY, *then at* ISABEL, *and goes out rather reluctantly.* ISABEL *watches him till he is out of sight.*

ISABEL.

Is anything the matter with David?

MOWBRAY.

Not that I know of.

ISABEL.

I want to talk to you about him.

[*Sits on the sofa.*

MOWBRAY.

I want to talk to you about myself. [*Sits near her.*]

ISABEL.

Afterwards. [*Throughout the following scene her manner is nothing more than friendly. She does not think* MOWBRAY *is in love with her. His tenderness and earnestness do not make the impression on her that they might at another time, as she is now absorbed in thoughts of* DAVID.] I shouldn't say what I'm going to, only I trust you more than any man I know.

MOWBRAY.

You've made me feel prouder than I ever felt before.

ISABEL.

I'm glad you're so fond of — David. [*He betrays disappointment when she names* DAVID.] I've often wondered why it is. You are so different.

MOWBRAY.

Are we?

ISABEL.

Oh, yes — in everything. The way you play polo, for instance. You are so terribly in earnest.

I was watching you this afternoon. Your whole life seemed to depend on winning the game. And when David plays, I can't help seeing that he always knows what a good picture he makes. [MOWBRAY *laughs. Smiles at him.*] He does look very nice, doesn't he?

MOWBRAY.

I rather like his little vanities. He wouldn't be so — so David without them.

ISABEL.

He is forgiven many things just because he is David.

MOWBRAY.

A charming personality covers a multitude of sins.

ISABEL.

Everyone likes David, but — What do you think of him?

MOWBRAY.

I never think what I think of people I like.

ISABEL.

Do you think I oughtn't to have asked you?

MOWBRAY.

Oh, no. Because I know you like him too.

ISABEL.

Yes. But a girl can know so very little about a man's real life. *You* see David as one man of the world sees another; that's why I ask you what you think of him.

MOWBRAY.

When I first met David — I thought him a charming fellow with a weak character. Now — several years later — I think precisely the same thing.

ISABEL.

Yes. I know, he isn't bad — but, oh, so weak.

MOWBRAY.

But not so young.

ISABEL.

No.

MOWBRAY.

And if a man doesn't check the weaknesses that are part of his youth, they become part of his character.

ISABEL.

I'm afraid that's true.

MOWBRAY.

He is one of those people who are so absorbed in the present that they learn nothing from the past and prepare nothing for the future. Of

course, he is always *resolving* to spend his time more profitably, — but somehow he never does, — and he mistakes these good resolutions for practical virtues. Whenever he yields to temptation he promptly suffers remorse. He considers remorse is a virtue and sufficient penalty for his sin. Then instead of principles he has a few nice, gentlemanly instincts — and these I think constitute his whole chance of scraping through life respectably. He has no conception that characters are built and don't grow. It's pitiful, isn't it? I know so many men like him — wasters and drifters — and the very best company in the world.

ISABEL.

They need someone strong to guide them.

MOWBRAY.

Unless it's in the wrong direction — and then, — anyone will do.

ISABEL.

I *had* to ask you, I *must* know. And there is no one else in the world I can ask. [*Pauses before she says, simply.*] We have been engaged for three years.

MOWBRAY.

[*Concealing his disappointment with difficulty.*] Oh, I didn't know. I shouldn't have said that if I'd known.

ISABEL.

I'm grateful to you. You have only put into words what I couldn't help feeling was true. I think if we could be married soon I might help him to be the man I used to hope he would be of himself. But I don't see how we can be. David has nothing but his pay. I have a home here, but that's all. Mother and I lived almost on charity after my father died, till mother married Colonel Jardine — so I have no money of my own. That's why we have had to keep our engagement secret. When David asked to be engaged to me three years ago, they wouldn't hear of it. They think it is all over between us now. But it's far from all over.

MOWBRAY.

Do you still love him?

ISABEL.

[*Earnestly.*] Yes, yes. I *do* love him. But love like mine is such tyranny that sometimes I have almost prayed to escape from it.

MOWBRAY.

[*Tenderly.*] Poor child. I know you are brave and self-reliant. [*Trying to force a lighter tone through his emotion.*] You are the general of this household. Anyone can see that. [*His emotion getting the better of him.*] But it is

hard to *always* have to brace yourself to be a prop to the weak. I know you must often grow weary, and long to lean on someone strong.

ISABEL.

[*Half-sobbing.*] Don't — don't say that. [*Trying to smile through her tears.*] I have to go on — being the prop.

MOWBRAY.

If we could bear one another's burdens, but we can't carry them far. We all live our inmost lives alone. [*Enter* DAVID.] Ah, David, — finished your stroll? I'll go and take mine.

[CAPTAIN MOWBRAY *goes out.*

DAVID.

[*With a genuinely generous impulse.*] Isabel. I'll go away. I'll set you free if you like.

ISABEL.

[*Taken aback.*] David.

DAVID.

Am I standing between you and him?

ISABEL.

How can you say that? Captain Mowbray and I have never been anything more than friends.

DAVID.

I thought — [*Takes her by the arm and turns her towards him, looking in her face.*] What has he been saying to you?

ISABEL.

[*Simply.*] We were talking of you. I told him of our engagement.

DAVID.

I thought you were beginning to care for him more than you used, and — [*Hesitates, drops his hold of her and turns away.*] I'm so unhappy. [*He sits down and buries his face in his hands. She stands looking at him with mournful resignation, waiting for him to continue.*] You don't know what I've been through this last week. I felt as if I should go mad, I was so angry and jealous — seeing how you seemed to care for him, and how he cared for you and knowing how unworthy I am. I thought you were slipping away from me. The other day I thought I'd make one last effort to keep you — so I went and got that. [*He takes a marriage license from his pocket and shows it to her. She peruses it before she speaks.*]

ISABEL.

You went to the Registry Office and got a license?

DAVID.

I realised what a mad thing it was to do as

soon as I saw you. You were talking to him. I daren't show it to you, so I went away. That was yesterday. When I left here I fully determined never to come back. I made up my mind to write and tell you you were free and that I'd gone away for ever.

ISABEL.

[*Calmly; returning the license to him.*] Why *did* you come back?

DAVID.

When I got to London I took all my money out of the Bank. You know it isn't much, but I thought it would be enough to get me abroad somewhere. I wanted to get out of it all. I was desperate; then, all at once, I thought I'd give my luck one last chance. I went to a place I know and gambled. I thought perhaps I'd win — win a lot, so that I could come back and ask you to marry me at once. [*Despondently.*] Of course I lost everything. [*Bitterly.*] That's why I came back.

ISABEL.

O, David — and you promised me you wouldn't gamble again.

DAVID.

Do you want me to set you free? I will, if you want.

ISABEL.

I've been thinking it might be wiser. [*He turns away.*] Suppose we *do* set each other free. What will become of *you?*

DAVID.

It wouldn't matter much what became of me then.

ISABEL.

It would matter a great deal to *me.* O, David, I've been very loyal to you these three years, but when you disappoint me so and break your promises — you make it very hard for me. You seem to have no ambition and no sense of responsibility. You show so little moral force in every way that I really can't see what makes you stop short of crime.

DAVID.

I've tried to keep straight for your sake.

ISABEL.

But I want you to do right because it is right.

DAVID.

That's the way Frank talks to me. He's strong — so are you. You both have a lot of what you call moral force. That's why you can't understand us who have hardly any. Frank was born to rise. He can do it alone. But I'm what the woman I love makes me.

ISABEL.

You make me so afraid.

DAVID.

I suppose I'm not worth saving. It's wasting your good life to try and make something of mine. You'd better give me up.

ISABEL.

How can I? Suppose you loved a bad woman?

DAVID.

Well?

ISABEL.

How could I bear to see you dragged down by a bad woman, knowing that I might have saved you? [*Goes to him with sudden impulse, kneels beside him and puts her arms about him.*] David! David! You must try — try hard — for my sake.

DAVID.

[*Holds her in his arms, speaks brokenly.*] Don't let me go. It's only you can save me. I'll try to be different. I can't do it alone. But I'll try to be what you want me to be; I'll begin again — where we began three years ago. You trusted me then. I'll try to make you proud of me again.

ISABEL.

[*Half-crying, as she leans against him.*] I was

so proud of you then. You will try, dear — won't you? Oh, you will try. [*He takes her in his arms and kisses her. Then she rises, still holding his hand.*] It will be hard work, David. We shall need all our courage.

[VICKY *enters with an open telegram in her hand.*

VICKY.

Isabel. [ISABEL *goes towards her.* DAVID *remains seated and doesn't hear what they say.*] Here is a telegram from the detective. He'll be here on the seven twenty-five.

ISABEL.

[*Reading the telegram.*] Oh, then I'll go down and meet him. I can tell him all about it on the way up.

VICKY.

Well, you'd better hurry up or you'll be late for dinner. Mother and Mrs. Gorringe have gone up to dress already.

[VICKY *goes out.*

ISABEL.

David. [DAVID *looks towards her.*] I have to go and meet the seven twenty-five. Will you drive me to the station?

DAVID.

[*Smiles.*] Yes.

ISABEL.

Wait here while I put my things on.

[ISABEL *goes out. It is now dusk.* DAVID *takes the diamond necklace from an inner pocket and looks at it, his face expressing mental agony. He closes his hand over it.*

DAVID.

[*Praying earnestly.*] Lord, I repent. Help me to restore it. Help me, dear Lord. Don't bring disgrace upon me now.

ISABEL.

[*Calls without.*] David! [*He starts violently, taking his handkerchief from his pocket, and wrapping it round the necklace.*] David! [*He looks about distracted, rising with his hand resting on the pedestal for support as* ISABEL *enters. She wears her hat and jacket and turns on the electric light as she enters.*] I'm ready. [*He hesitates, his hand still resting on the pedestal, which is hidden from her by his body.*] Aren't you coming? [*He still hesitates. She betrays a little disappointment as she says*] I thought you'd like to come with me.

DAVID.

[*He drops the handkerchief and the necklace in the bowl, then goes to her.*] Yes.

ISABEL.

[*Affectionately.*] Let it be like the old times, David. Shall it?

DAVID.

[*With a breaking voice.*] Yes, dear. It shall be, — like the old times.

[*They go out together.*

CURTAIN.

THE SECOND ACT

SCENE: — *The same as Act I. It is the evening of the same day.*

Enter ISABEL, DAVID CAIRN *and* JERNIGAN, *a detective in plain clothes. He is a tall, grave man, approaching middle-age. His manner is always formal and professional. He is never amused by anything the other characters do or say.* ISABEL *and* DAVID *are dressed as at end of Act I. All the characters who enter later wear dinner dress.*

ISABEL.

[*Entering.*] I suppose they are at dinner. [*To* JERNIGAN.] Colonel Jardine will see you here when he has finished. Have you dined yourself?

JERNIGAN.

Yes, thank you.

ISABEL.

You might like to go to your room now. [*She rings the bell beside the fireplace, then comes to* JERNIGAN, *speaking so that* DAVID, *who is standing at a little distance, does not hear her.*]

Of course, none of the servants know that you are a detective. I thought it better not to tell them.

JERNIGAN.

Certainly.

[CHARLES, *the footman, enters.*

ISABEL.

Show Mr. Jernigan his room, and see that he has everything he wants.

CHARLES.

Yes, Miss. [*Holds the door open for* JERNIGAN.]

[JERNIGAN *goes out.*

ISABEL.

Charles. Are they still at dinner?

CHARLES.

They've almost done, Miss.

ISABEL.

Mr. Cairn and I will dine when they have finished.

CHARLES.

Yes, Miss.

[CHARLES *goes out and closes the door after him.*

DAVID.

[*Glances at the bowl and says to himself.*] Now. If I could get it back while they are all at dinner!

ISABEL.

What are you saying, David?

DAVID.

[*Turns to her.*] Nothing.

ISABEL.

[*Comes to him.*] Don't be too down-hearted, dear. I feel sure you are going to conquer, and I'm going to help you. And it isn't as if you'd done something really bad. Now, I'd better go and dress for dinner — so had you.

DAVID.

Yes, I'll go directly. I shan't take as long as you.

[MRS. JARDINE *enters.*

MRS. JARDINE.

What's made you so late, Isabel? We've finished dinner.

ISABEL.

The train was late.

MRS. JARDINE.

I wonder they don't make the railway guides

an hour later, then one would know what time to expect the trains. Did you bring the detective?

[DAVID *is startled at the mention of a detective, but conceals his dismay from the others.*

ISABEL.

[*To* DAVID.] I didn't tell you Mr. Jernigan was a detective.

DAVID.

What do you want a detective for?

ISABEL.

Mrs. Gorringe has missed her diamond necklace, and we think it may have been stolen.

DAVID.

Oh, I hope she'll find it.

[COLONEL JARDINE *enters.*

COLONEL JARDINE.

Oh, my dear Isabel, we've finished dinner, and you've not changed.

ISABEL.

I shan't be long.

[ISABEL *goes out.*

COLONEL JARDINE.

Are you going to sit here, Emily?

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Who has taken a magazine from the table and seated herself in an armchair.*] You can't expect me to sit in the drawing-room and watch Mrs. Gorringe making sheep's eyes at Captain Mowbray. I can't say I enjoyed my dinner. The fish was burnt, and I never did care for meringues. And the way that woman cackled about her diamond necklace was enough to — Well, I'm sick of the whole thing before we've even begun to look for it. [*Peruses her magazine.* DAVID *goes out.* COLONEL JARDINE *paces moodily up and down with his hands in his pockets.* MRS. JARDINE *casts impatient glances at him. He does not notice her. She endures a few moments before she speaks.*] I have quite enough to bear, without seeing you sulk.

COLONEL JARDINE.

I'm not sulking.

MRS. JARDINE.

You are. You haven't said a word since the roast left the table. You know how you annoy me when you sulk. [*She peruses her magazine a moment, then glances at him impatiently as before.*] I wish you'd stop waddling about like that. Can't you see I'm on the verge of hysteria? [JERNIGAN *enters. He pauses on the threshold,* MRS. JARDINE *stares at him.*] Who's this?

[COLONEL JARDINE *goes to meet* JERNIGAN. *His manner is more restrained before* JERNIGAN *than when he is alone with his family.* MRS. JARDINE, *too wrought up to heed the conventions, puts no constraint upon herself.*

JERNIGAN.

The servant said you would like to see me.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Ah, yes. How d'you do? [*Going to* MRS. JARDINE.] Emily, this is Mr. Jernigan, the detective.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Aside to her husband.*] Ought I to shake hands?

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Aside to her.*] No. [*Turns to* JERNIGAN.] My wife, Mr. Jernigan. [MRS. JARDINE *and* JERNIGAN *bow stiffly to each other.*] Now, I suppose you want to ask me a lot of questions. [*Sits on sofa, signing to* JERNIGAN *to be seated.*] Well — fire away.

JERNIGAN.

[*Remains standing.*] Do you suspect any particular person of having taken this necklace?

COLONEL JARDINE.

No.

MRS. JARDINE.

We suppose it's one of the servants.

COLONEL JARDINE.

My dear — we don't know.

MRS. JARDINE.

Who else would steal it?

COLONEL JARDINE.

My dear —

MRS. JARDINE.

[*To her husband.*] Allow me to speak, please. [*To* JERNIGAN.] I strongly suspect one of the housemaids, called Pipkin.

JERNIGAN.

May I ask why you suspect Pipkin?

MRS. JARDINE.

There's something I don't like about her eyes. I didn't like them from the first, and I'm never mistaken in eyes. Then, she's always looking out of the windows, and — oh, several things.

JERNIGAN.

I see. [*Taking out a note-book.*] I suppose you keep a large staff of servants?

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Smiling conceitedly.*] Oh, very large. I believe I have more servants than anyone in this neighbourhood.

JERNIGAN.

Were they all in the house when the robbery was discovered?

COLONEL JARDINE.

No. Some of them were watching the polo.

MRS. JARDINE.

I'll ring and find out which of them were in. [*Rings the bell by the fireplace.*]

JERNIGAN.

[*To* COLONEL JARDINE.] You have several guests staying here, I think?

COLONEL JARDINE.

Three.

JERNIGAN.

All of them people you know well, and trust?

COLONEL JARDINE.

Oh, certainly.

MRS. JARDINE.

I wouldn't be *too* sure.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Remonstrating.*] My dear.

MRS. JARDINE.

You'll never get at it if you are so afraid to suspect anyone. I am trying to help Mr. Jernigan with a few suggestions. [*Sits down again in her armchair.*]

[CHARLES *enters.*

COLONEL JARDINE.

Oh, Charles, I want you to tell me which of the servants went to watch the polo this afternoon?

CHARLES.

All of us, sir.

MRS. JARDINE.

Do you mean to say I was left asleep in an empty house?

CHARLES.

Oh, no, ma'am, I was forgetting. One of the maids stayed in.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Which one?

CHARLES.

Pipkin.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Springing up excitedly.*] There! I said all along it was Pipkin. [*To* JERNIGAN.] You'd better go straight to the kitchen and arrest her. Have you got the handcuffs?

JERNIGAN.

[*Quietly and politely.*] One moment, please. [*To* CHARLES.] You are quite sure that no one else was in the house this afternoon, besides the housemaid Pipkin?

CHARLES.

Only the mistress, sir.

JERNIGAN.

[*To* MRS. JARDINE.] Oh, were *you* at home?

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Reluctantly.*] Yes. [*She glances uneasily at the other three.*] I hope you don't suggest that *I* stole it.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Going towards her, to restrain her.*] My dear Emily.

MRS. JARDINE.

This is a pretty pass you've brought things to, bringing your detectives into the house, and turning the library into a police court. I sup-

pose you know I'm as good as committed to appear at the next Petty Sessions.

JERNIGAN.

When was the necklace last seen?

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Crossly.*] I don't know.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*To* CHARLES.] Ask Mrs. Gorringe to come here. [CHARLES *goes out.* COLONEL JARDINE *turns to* JERNIGAN.] *She'll* be able to tell us that.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*To* JERNIGAN.] You see, Mr. Jernigan, if Mrs. Gorringe had locked up her jewels properly, as she ought to have done, all this would never have happened, and we might now be playing bridge as usual.

JERNIGAN.

Yes.

[MRS. GORRINGE *enters, followed by* VICKY, *who sits in the window.* MRS. GORRINGE *comes forward, smiling, and evidently pleased with the importance of her situation.*

COLONEL JARDINE.

Mrs. Gorringe, this is Mr. Jernigan, the de-

tective. [MRS. GORRINGE *bows to* JERNIGAN.] Now, he's going to put some questions to you, and you must be very exact in your replies. Think you're in court, you know.

MRS. GORRINGE.

I understand.

[*Takes up a conspicuous position: very self-conscious from being the centre of interest.*

JERNIGAN.

I didn't quite catch the name.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Pronouncing very distinctly.*] Gorringe.

JERNIGAN.

Mrs. Gorringe.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes, I married Mr. Gorringe in the year ninety-five. Before that I was a Miss Rose Pilkington of Ipswich. Is it necessary to give the age?

JERNIGAN.

Oh, no, thank you.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Thank you. I have had three children —

JERNIGAN.

[*Interrupting her.*] Yes, but it's not necessary to give these details now.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Oh, I see.

JERNIGAN.

You've lost a diamond necklace?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes. It had a pearl clasp.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Impatiently.*] Oh!

JERNIGAN.

When did you last see it?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Last night, when I went to bed.

JERNIGAN.

Did you wear it last evening?

MRS. GORRINGE.

No, I wore turquoise.

JERNIGAN.

But you remember seeing the necklace when you went to bed?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes, I had it on.

JERNIGAN.

When you went to bed?

MRS. GORRINGE.

No, before.

JERNIGAN.

You had it on after you went to your room, and before you went to bed?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes.

JERNIGAN.

Was anyone else in your room?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Oh, no. I was quite alone. Mr. Gorringe is at home in Croydon.

JERNIGAN.

Were you wearing any other jewelry at the time?

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Reluctantly.*] Yes.

JERNIGAN.

I should like to know exactly what other jewelry you had on then.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Some bracelets and rings and pins, three necklaces, and some hair ornaments.

JERNIGAN.

Had you these ornaments on separately or at one time?

[MRS. GORRINGE *hesitates, glances uneasily at* MRS. JARDINE, *who is staring at her mercilessly.*

MRS. GORRINGE.

I prefer not to answer that question.

JERNIGAN.

I am trying to find out if it is not possible that someone saw you last night with your necklace on.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Frightened.*] Oh, no, I'm sure no one saw me.

JERNIGAN.

As you have not lost any of the other ornaments, I want to know if you had them on separately or at one time.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Reluctantly, after looking askance at* MRS. JARDINE.] I had them all on together.

[MRS. JARDINE *looks at her husband.* VICKY *puts her hand over her face.* JERNIGAN *is unmoved. Nobody laughs.*

JERNIGAN.

Had you any particular reason for wearing them then?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes.

JERNIGAN.

What?

MRS. GORRINGE.

I wanted to see how I should look as an Oriental.

JERNIGAN.

Ah, I understand. Then you don't remember this diamond necklace more particularly than the other jewelry?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes, I do. Because when I took it off I examined it to see if the drops were quite firm. I ought to tell you first that it has five drops in front which come off and make into a tiara —

JERNIGAN.

[*Trying to restrain her.*] Yes, yes. And now how did you come to discover the diamonds were missing?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Well, I went up to my room when I came in from the polo match, and suppose the dressing-table to be there — [*points to* VICKY] where Miss Jardine is. And the door where this one is. [*Points to the door.*] I came in at the door something like this — [*Goes to the door, opens it, goes just outside and comes in again.*] I closed the door. [*Closes the door, and goes towards* VICKY *as she says.*] Then I crossed over to the dressing-table in quite an ordinary manner, just as I am doing now. [*When she has nearly arrived at* VICKY *she stops suddenly.*] Oh, no. I've made a mistake. The dressing-table, of course, would be there. [*Points towards* MRS. JARDINE.] I was thinking of the one at home. [*She pauses a moment undecided, then says:*] I must come in again. [*She then runs to the door, opens it, goes just outside, closes it, opens it again and puts her head just inside to say.*] Now you are to suppose I didn't come in before. [*Takes her head back, and closes the door.*]

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Scarcely able to restrain her impatience.*] I shall scream in a minute.

[VICKY *begins to shake with laughter, putting her handkerchief over her mouth. The others watch* MRS. GORRINGE *gravely.* MRS. GORRINGE *enters and closes the door.*

MRS. GORRINGE.

I crossed over to the dressing-table — which, of course, is here now. [*Points to a spot near* MRS. JARDINE, *walks towards it, and stands still.*] I opened my jewel-case. I don't know what made me do that then. I suppose I must have had a presentiment. Oh, no. It was to get these rings. [*Bends up her hand to shew her rings.*] I thought it looked different somehow, and what was it I said to myself? [*Frowns as she thinks a moment.*] Oh, yes. I remember saying to myself, "Well, that's funny!" Then all at once it came across me like a flash of lightning and I clasped my hands and exclaimed: [*Clasps her hands dramatically.*] "Great heavens, my diamond necklace has gone!" [*Drops her dramatic pose and tone.*] Just like that.

JERNIGAN.

[*Gravely.*] I see.

[VICKY, *screaming with laughter, and holding her handkerchief over her mouth in a vain attempt to smother the sound, rushes out. Shrieks of hysterical laughter are heard from without.* MRS. GORRINGE *is very much hurt and annoyed.*

COLONEL JARDINE.

Vicky, hush, hush. [*Shuts the door after* VICKY, *then goes to* MRS. JARDINE, *as he says.*] My dear, that child is becoming intolerable.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Almost crying with indignation, drawing* JERNIGAN *towards the sofa.*] Mr. Jernigan, I want to speak to you privately a moment. [*They sit down.*] Now, — I want the house thoroughly searched for my necklace.

JERNIGAN.

Certainly.

MRS. GORRINGE.

I want everything done. [*Looks towards* COLONEL *and* MRS. JARDINE *to see if they are listening, then moves nearer to* JERNIGAN.] I never saw such indifference as they all show about my loss. This afternoon I could scarcely get them to send for you. They just dawdled over their tea — and Mrs. Jardine didn't want me to say anything at all about it. The way she went on you'd think my diamonds were only paste.

JERNIGAN.

I will do everything in my power to recover your jewels.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Thank you. It's a most valuable necklace. A lapidary once told me that the middle pendant — I think I told you there were five drops in front — is as large as a roc's egg.

JERNIGAN.

A roc's egg?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Was it a roc or a pigeon? I forget, but it was some sort of egg.

JERNIGAN.

Will you take me to your room?

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Misunderstanding him, rises indignantly.*] Certainly not. I couldn't think of such a thing.

JERNIGAN.

If you want me to trace your necklace, I must visit your room first.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Seeing her mistake, smiles confusedly.*] Oh, I see. Excuse me. [*Addresses* COLONEL *and* MRS. JARDINE.] Mr. Jernigan and I are going upstairs to my room for a few minutes. [*They stare blankly at her. She explains hastily.*] Anyone can come with us. Come, Mr. Jernigan. This way, Mr. Jernigan.

[MRS. GORRINGE *goes out, followed by* JERNIGAN. *As soon as the door is closed after them,* MRS. JARDINE *rises and walks about, giving vent to her suppressed irritation.*

MRS. JARDINE.

How I'm to bear the rest of Mrs. Gorringe's visit I don't see. She's only been here three days, and she came for a week, and she's just one of those women who if she came for a week would stay for a week, — whatever happened. I suppose she'll never see what inconvenience she's put us all to by having her necklace stolen. Everyone in the house suspected, — especially *me,* it seems.

COLONEL JARDINE.

That's nonsense, Emily.

MRS. JARDINE.

I never liked Mrs. Gorringe. I don't see how I ever came to invite her here — [COLONEL JARDINE *makes a movement of irritation.*] You needn't do that.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Do what?

[*She imitates the movement of irritation he has just made.*

MRS. JARDINE.

Why, that! I suppose there'll be no bridge this evening.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Why not?

MRS. JARDINE.

Well, who's to play? You know we can't make a four without Mrs. Gorringe, — not that she's such a good player.

COLONEL JARDINE.

We can get someone else.

MRS. JARDINE.

And how do you expect *me* to keep my mind on the game with the house in such a state of uproar? I never can settle properly for the night if I don't have a game of cards. [*Takes her patience-board and cards from a table near the window and brings them to the writing-table.*] I suppose I must content myself with patience. [*Sits at the writing-table, opens her patience-board, and lays out her cards.* MOWBRAY *enters.*]

MOWBRAY.

I didn't know Mrs. Gorringe was expecting her husband.

COLONEL JARDINE.

She isn't that I know of.

MOWBRAY.

Oh, I thought that must be Mr. Gorringe who went into her room with her.

MRS. JARDINE.

I suppose she won't be satisfied till she makes a scandal in the house.

[VICKY *enters, mimicking* MRS. GORRINGE *as she moves about.*

VICKY.

I came in at the door something like this. I closed the door. I crossed over to my dressing-table in quite an ordinary way, just like this, to get some rings. Then I said to myself, "Great heavens, my diamond necklace has gone!" Just like that.

[*The others watch her, amused, then* MRS. JARDINE *laughs heartily. She becomes quite amiable in seeing* MRS. GORRINGE *derided.*

MRS. JARDINE.

Excellent, excellent! Mrs. Gorringe to the life!

MOWBRAY.

What's that?

VICKY.

[*Becoming suddenly serious.*] Oh, you don't know.

MRS. JARDINE.

You may as well. [*Addressing* MOWBRAY.] Mrs. Gorringe has lost a diamond necklace.

MOWBRAY.

Not the one with the pearl clasp and five drops in front?

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Laughing.*] Yes— [*Seriously.*] Really, some women *are* peculiar.

MOWBRAY.

Now I see why she talked about it all through dinner and asked me to repeat the story I told you about the fellow who stole a bracelet.

MRS. JARDINE.

And that was a detective.

MOWBRAY.

Oh, not the father of her three children?

[MRS. GORRINGE *enters.* MRS. JARDINE *betrays her irritation as soon as* MRS. GORRINGE *speaks and begins packing up her patience-board.*

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*To* COLONEL JARDINE.] He's going to question the servants now. And he wants to know if you'll go.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Yes, yes, certainly.

[COLONEL JARDINE *bustles out.*

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Looking archly at* CAPTAIN MOWBRAY.] Have you been wondering where I'd run away to for so long?

MOWBRAY.

I am always wondering about you.

MRS. JARDINE.

Vicky! [VICKY *comes to her.* MRS. JARDINE *gives her her patience-board, and cards.*] Carry that into the drawing-room for me. I feel as if I couldn't sit in the same room with that woman.

[MRS. JARDINE *goes out.* VICKY *follows her, carrying the patience-board.*

MOWBRAY.

I'm sure I hope you'll soon find your necklace.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Sighing.*] Thank you, I hope so. [*Archly.*] And until I do I shall expect my friends to do all they can to console me. [*Sits on the sofa.*] Now, amuse me.

MOWBRAY.

Shall I sing or recite?

MRS. GORRINGE.

What a tease you are. We were having a delightful talk about something at tea this after-

noon, when the others came in and interrupted us. [*Pretending to forget.*] What *were* we talking about?

MOWBRAY.

Polo?

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Still as if trying to remember.*] I don't think it was polo.

MOWBRAY.

Heroes?

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Annoyed at his obtuseness.*] Oh, no — something interesting.

MOWBRAY.

Love?

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Archly.*] For shame. [*Sits with her back to him, playfully severe.*] I won't speak to you if you're going to be naughty.

MOWBRAY.

I remember. You said you noticed —

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Turning to him, playfully indignant.*] I'm sure I never said anything so forward.

MOWBRAY.

That I was in love with some one I met in this house.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Coyly dropping her eyes.*] You're incorrigible.

MOWBRAY.

It's all off now. I've withdrawn.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Showing the disappointment she feels in this sudden end to her flirtation.*] Oh! [*As he wanders away — she looks after him, then says archly,*] I think I shall have to call you Captain Faint Heart.

MOWBRAY.

[*Turning to her.*] But if I can't honourably make love to the lady.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Cooingly.*] Isn't all fair in love?

MOWBRAY.

It's love itself that's so unfair. It's a field in which merit doesn't count. Incompetence as often wins. The champions must have bright eyes, smooth cheeks, and charming ways. That's all they need. An old stager is too heavily handicapped when he has to run against a youngster.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Enjoying herself immensely again.*] So there's a youngster in love with your fair lady too! This is most interesting. [*Laughs.*]

MOWBRAY.

[*Grimly.*] Quite laughable, isn't it?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Poor Captain Faint Heart. But I dare say the lady would listen to you before the youngster.

MOWBRAY.

[*Says earnestly.*] Oh, do you think so?

MRS. GORRINGE.

I didn't say she'd listen to either. [MOWBRAY *moves away.* MRS. GORRINGE *looks after him in mild surprise.*] I declare, I believe you're quite in earnest.

MOWBRAY.

[*Looking at her.*] In earnest? Did you suppose I was flirting?

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Smiling pensively.*] I thought there might be just a soupçon of reality in it.

MOWBRAY.

[*Sighing half-humorously.*] Just a soupçon — eh?

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Coming towards him.*] How could I believe you meant more? [*With a touch of reproach in her tone.*] Did you think I should have let you go on if I'd known your heart was involved?

MOWBRAY.

You knew all along it was hopeless?

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Sentimentally.*] Yes. It is hopeless. I'm not angry with you.

MOWBRAY.

[*Puzzled.*] Angry?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Perhaps I'm even a little proud of my conquest.

MOWBRAY.

Your conquest?

MRS. GORRINGE.

But I hope I shall never forget my duty to Mr. Gorringe and the children.

[*The shock of surprise is so great to* Mow-

BRAY *that he laughs.* MRS. GORRINGE *looks extremely hurt, and seeing she has made a mistake hurries towards the door.*

MOWBRAY.

[*Trying not to laugh.*] I beg your pardon, Mrs. Gorringe — but there must have been a mistake.

[MRS. GORRINGE *does not quite go out of the door, but stands with her hand on the handle, considering a moment. She then breaks into forced laughter and comes towards* MOWBRAY.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Pretending to be in fits of laughter, which are obviously forced.*] So you thought — that I thought — you meant me. What a trick I played on you! It *was* too bad of me. But, oh, what fun it was! I took you in so beautifully. You ought to have seen your face. It *was* fun — such fun — oh, what fun! [*Finding her vocabulary exhausted, and as* MOWBRAY *doesn't help her, but only watches her, she goes towards the door, still laughing. As she does so* MOWBRAY *turns away. She stops laughing suddenly when she reaches the door, smothers an angry exclamation and goes out in a huff.*

MOWBRAY.

[*Chuckling to himself.*] Mr. Gorringe and the

children. What a morass that woman's mind must be.

[DAVID *enters, dressed in his evening clothes.*

DAVID.

Where are the others?

MOWBRAY.

Hunting for Mrs. Gorringe's necklace with five pearl clasps and a drop in front. It's a great secret. Everybody's talking about it.

DAVID.

Oh, I didn't hear them, but I've been dining alone with Isabel.

MOWBRAY.

[*Looking earnestly at* DAVID.] David, be very good to that girl.

DAVID.

I *did* offer to let her off. I told her if she thought she could be happier with you —

MOWBRAY.

What did she say?

DAVID.

She said you'd never been any more than

friends. I don't think she ever thought of you any other way.

MOWBRAY.

[*Slowly, with a sigh.*] No, I don't think she ever did. *She* doesn't think every man is in love with her — like some people. She can be a friend. It's a wonderful thing in a woman.

DAVID.

[*Troubled.*] I know it's not right that a bungler like me should stand between you and Isabel.

MOWBRAY.

[*Generously.*] *You* aren't to blame. Nobody is. It's just one of those damned things that can't be helped. And you must try not to be a bungler. And I must try what my philosophy is worth.

DAVID.

You always had lots of philosophy, hadn't you?

MOWBRAY.

Oh, lots — to give away. It's so easy to be a philosopher in one's unimpassioned moments. [*With conviction.*] But I believe in my philosophy all the same, and when I've had time to remember that I'm only one man in a big world, with no special license to have everything my own way, I shall find there are still a few things worth living for. But I must be alone.

DAVID.

Shall I go?

MOWBRAY.

No, I didn't mean that. But I can't stay in this house now. It's an impossible situation — so I think I shall just pack my things and go up to London to-night.

DAVID.

How are you going to explain it?

MOWBRAY.

[*Meditating.*] Yes — that's awkward. I don't want to explain it. I'll leave a note and say I was called away, and you can back me up in the morning.

DAVID.

I'm awfully sorry.

MOWBRAY.

That's all right. And we're just as good pals as ever, aren't we, old boy?

[MOWBRAY *goes out.* DAVID *stands still a few moments, expressing trouble and anxiety in his face. He glances at the bowl.*

DAVID.

No one has guessed yet. Shall I never get a chance of taking it back?

ISABEL.

[*Heard outside.*] I suppose we can't do anything more to-night.

[*Enter* MRS. JARDINE, MRS. GORRINGE *and* ISABEL, *now wearing an evening dress.*

MRS. JARDINE.

I can't say I think much of your detective, Mrs. Gorringe, spending a whole evening ransacking the house and then finding nothing.

ISABEL.

It may not be in the house.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Mournfully.*] No. Most likely at this very moment they're boiling it down in some thieves' kitchen. Oh, dear! [*Nearly cries.*]

[ISABEL *comforts her.*

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Turns to* ISABEL.] I suppose you've heard the latest?

ISABEL.

No — what?

MRS. JARDINE.

They accuse *me.*

ISABEL.

[*Laughing incredulously.*] Oh, mother!

MRS. JARDINE.

You weren't here when he cornered me in his nasty police court way and forced me to admit I was alone in the house with Pipkin.

ISABEL.

What did he say?

MRS. JARDINE.

It wasn't what he said. It was the look he gave me. You know I'm never mistaken in eyes.

ISABEL.

We are all equally under suspicion; everyone who was in the house since Mrs. Gorringe saw her diamonds.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*With scarcely veiled contempt.*] Yes — since you dressed up in all your jewels, Mrs. Gorringe — to see how you would look as an Oriental. [*Pauses before she adds,*] That only lets David off. [DAVID *starts slightly, unnoticed by the others.*] It's a lucky thing for you, David, that you had to go away yesterday. You are the only person in the house who couldn't have stolen Mrs. Gorringe's necklace. [*An expression of relief passes over* DAVID'S *face for a moment, then he looks gloomy again.* VICKY *enters.*]

VICKY.

I've come to say good-night. Good-night, Mrs. Gorringe. [*Kisses her.*]

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Sadly.*] Good-night, dear.

VICKY.

[*Kissing her mother.*] Good-night, mother.

MRS. JARDINE.

I suppose it's nearly time for us all to retire; not that we shall sleep, but it's been such a dreadful day we may as well finish it as soon as possible.

MRS. GORRINGE.

I feel so timid about going to bed in that room.

ISABEL.

David has the room next yours, and you can have a bell by your bed if you like.

MRS. GORRINGE.

But suppose the thief should enter in the dead of night and should seize my hand before I could grasp the bell, thinking to find rings upon it, or my throat before I could scream, thinking to find a necklace there.

ISABEL.

Would you like to share my room?

[DAVID *listens intently for the answer.*

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Eagerly.*] Oh, thank you, yes. I'll go and take my things there. I think we'd better put what's left of my jewelry under our pillows.

ISABEL.

Won't that be rather uncomfortable?

MRS. GORRINGE.

I'll give *you* the flat cases and take the lumpy ones myself. Good-night, Mr. David. [*Goes to* MRS. JARDINE, *offering to kiss her.*] Good-night, Mrs. Jardine!

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Embracing* MRS. GORRINGE *and kissing her affectionately on each cheek.*] Good-night, dear Mrs. Gorringe. Sleep well. [MRS. GORRINGE *goes out.*] What a woman! [MRS. JARDINE *and* VICKY *go out.*]

DAVID.

Isabel. [*She comes to him.*] I *am* going to try and be worthy of you.

ISABEL.

You're beginning to be hopeful.

DAVID.

Yes.

ISABEL.

You looked so depressed I was almost sorry for what I said.

DAVID.

You did me a world of good. I think you saved me.

[COLONEL JARDINE *enters, drawing* MOWBRAY *by the arm.* MOWBRAY *wears an overcoat and carries a suit-case in his hand.* JERNIGAN *follows them and stands near the door.*

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*In his most jovial manner, laughing and drawing* MOWBRAY *along.*] What do you think I found this rascal doing? Sneaking out of the house to get the last train without saying a word to any of us.

MOWBRAY.

[*Embarrassed.*] I was called away. I left a note and asked David to explain.

ISABEL.

[*Seeing* MOWBRAY *is embarrassed, goes towards him to help him out.*] Father, Captain Mowbray may be going on important business. Don't make him miss his train.

JERNIGAN.

[*Comes forward.*] Excuse me. [*They all look towards* JERNIGAN.] No one ought to leave the house to-night if it can possibly be avoided.

[DAVID *turns away to conceal his alarm from the others.*

MOWBRAY.

[*Readily.*] Certainly. [*Puts his suit-case on the floor.*]

JERNIGAN.

[*Naturally, — not at all suspicious of* MOWBRAY.] Just while this enquiry is going on.

MOWBRAY.

Yes, I see. I didn't think of that. I'll stay. [*Stoops to pick up his suit-case.*]

COLONEL JARDINE.

Don't you bother about that, the servant will take it up.

MOWBRAY.

Thank you.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*To* JERNIGAN.] Now, I'm thinking of going to bed. Do you want me for anything more to-night?

JERNIGAN.

No, I can get on all right. I may look about

the house after you have retired, but I shan't disturb anyone.

[COLONEL JARDINE *and* MOWBRAY *and* JERNIGAN *go out.*

ISABEL.

Now I must rush up and help Mrs. Gorringe to install herself in my room. She's sure to bring about a dozen dressing-gowns and little jackets. You wait here and then I'll come back and say good-night to you properly.

[*Goes out quickly, smiling back at* DAVID.

DAVID.

[*With decision.*] Her room is empty and next to mine. I'll take it back now.

[*He crosses quickly to the bowl, looks hastily towards the door, then dips his hand in the bowl.* MOWBRAY *strolls in. He has taken off his overcoat. He pauses and looks at* DAVID. *He shows plainly that his curiosity is aroused. He closes the door. Hearing the door close* DAVID *takes his hand quickly from the bowl, turns round and sees* MOWBRAY. *He is uncertain whether* MOWBRAY *has noticed anything or not. He comes towards him with an assumption of ease.*

DAVID.

Hullo, Frank.

MOWBRAY.

Hullo.

DAVID.

It's awfully hard lines to have to stay when you're feeling so bad about it.

MOWBRAY.

[*Searching the book-shelves and the writing-table.*] Yes, but it can't be helped.

DAVID.

[*After a slight pause.*] Aren't *you* going up?

MOWBRAY.

Not yet. I shall stay here awhile. I was looking for something to read, but I can't find anything I want. [*Sees his suit-case.*] Oh. [*Pulls it towards him and unstraps it as he speaks.*] I have a book here that I took to read in the train. [*Opens the suit-case and takes out a book, lets the lid of the case fall down without shutting it.*] If they aren't coming back, we may as well make ourselves comfortable. [*Puts his feet up on the sofa, facing* DAVID, *opens the book and reads.* DAVID *looks at him undecidedly, then strolls towards the window. When his back is turned,* MOWBRAY *glances up from his book and watches* DAVID. *When* DAVID *turns towards him he pretends to be absorbed in his book.*]

DAVID.

I say, Frank, Isabel asked me to wait for her here.

MOWBRAY.

[*Without looking up.*] Did she?

DAVID.

She's coming back to say good-night to me.

MOWBRAY.

[*As before.*] Oh.

DAVID.

We can't very well say good-night with you in the room.

MOWBRAY.

Then say it in another room. [*Continues reading.*]

DAVID.

Well, how long are you going to stay here?

MOWBRAY.

[*Without looking up.*] An hour or two. [DAVID *goes out into the garden reluctantly, looking back at* MOWBRAY *from the window.* MOWBRAY *appears to be absorbed in his book. As soon as* DAVID *is out of sight,* MOWBRAY *throws down*

his book, jumps up, goes quickly to the bowl, dips his hand in, takes out the necklace wrapped in the handkerchief, unwraps the handkerchief and discovers the necklace.] Good God!

[ISABEL *enters.*

MOWBRAY.

Look here, I know I can trust you; I've found the necklace.

[*She looks at the necklace with great surprise.*

ISABEL.

Where?

MOWBRAY.

In that bowl. [*Indicates the bowl.*] Take it back to her room — and say —

[JERNIGAN *enters.*

JERNIGAN.

I beg your pardon. I have just come in to make a thorough search here — [*Points to the necklace in* ISABEL'S *hands.*] May I see what you have there?

ISABEL.

The necklace. Captain Mowbray has just found it in that bowl.

[ISABEL *looks at* MOWBRAY. *He nods. She gives the necklace to* JERNIGAN.

JERNIGAN.

I'll take charge of it.

ISABEL.

I'll go and tell her it's found. [*Going towards the door.*]

MOWBRAY.

[*Going towards the garden entrance.*] I must go and see David.

[ISABEL *goes out.*

JERNIGAN.

It's a most unpleasant duty, but I am bound to ask if you wish to make any explanation.

MOWBRAY.

[*Hesitates a moment.*] I? None.

JERNIGAN.

Do you mind telling me what made you look in there? [*Indicating the bowl.*]

MOWBRAY.

I'd rather not say anything yet. It's a little late to disturb the household. You and I will see the Colonel in the morning.

[MOWBRAY *goes out into the garden.*

JERNIGAN.

[*Looks after* MOWBRAY, *then looks into the bowl. Next he examines the handkerchief to see if it has a name on it. He then kneels beside the suit-case, opens it, finds another handkerchief, compares the two and exclaims.*] Mowbray!

CURTAIN.

THE THIRD ACT

SCENE: — *Same as Acts I and II. It is after breakfast the next morning.* DAVID *and* ISABEL *are standing, looking in each other's eyes, holding each other's hands.* ISABEL *is dressed to go out.*

ISABEL.

I shall tell them I'm going to do my shopping, and you follow me in a few minutes.

DAVID.

Yes.

[MOWBRAY *enters from the garden.*

MOWBRAY.

Are you going out?

ISABEL.

Yes. I'm going into the town.

[ISABEL *goes out.*

MOWBRAY.

Last night when I came to tell you where I found Mrs. Gorringe's necklace, I couldn't get much out of you.

DAVID.

I felt awfully sleepy.

MOWBRAY.

I suppose you're wide awake this morning.

DAVID.

[*Smiling — uneasily.*] Yes — why?

MOWBRAY.

It was seeing you take your hand out of that bowl that made me look there afterwards.

DAVID.

I remember you saying that.

MOWBRAY.

I've been wondering ever since what you could have been looking there for?

DAVID.

Oh — for matches. They sometimes keep a box there.

MOWBRAY.

It was funny that when you were looking for the matches you didn't see the necklace.

DAVID.

Yes. I don't know how it was.

MOWBRAY.

H'm. [DAVID *turns away.*] Is that all you've got to say about it?

DAVID.

[*Trying to bluff* MOWBRAY.] You trust my word — don't you?

MOWBRAY.

[*Looks at him sorrowfully, goes to him and lays his hand on him as he says.*] My dear old boy, I'm the best friend you have.

DAVID.

[*Uneasily.*] I know that.

MOWBRAY.

[*Looking at his face.*] Have you nothing more to tell me?

DAVID.

[*Glances uneasily at* MOWBRAY *before he answers.*] No. [*Moves away.*]

[COLONEL JARDINE *enters.*

COLONEL JARDINE.

David, I hear you've got your marching orders.

DAVID.

Yes. We sail on Friday. I must join to-night, so I shall have to leave here this morning.

COLONEL JARDINE.

We shall be sorry to lose you.

DAVID.

Thank you. [*Takes up a newspaper and pretends to read it, as he listens anxiously to the other two.*]

COLONEL JARDINE.

Well, now, Mowbray, what would you do about Mrs. Gorringe's necklace, if you were in my place?

MOWBRAY.

[*Deliberately.*] Nothing.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Surprised.*] Nothing? Pooh, nonsense! Must do something. It's only fair to Mrs. Gorringe.

MOWBRAY.

Mrs. Gorringe has got it back.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Yes, but — it was a very awkward thing, you know, her losing it in our house. We ought to go to the bottom of this.

MOWBRAY.

I should think, as she is a visitor here, she'd be very unwilling to make any trouble about it.

COLONEL JARDINE.

But still, you know — it makes me feel very insecure. If one of the servants is a thief, I want to know which it is.

MOWBRAY.

It never seems quite fair to suppose that it's one of the servants just because you've no evidence that it isn't.

COLONEL JARDINE.

It can't be one of us.

MOWBRAY.

[*Speaks very earnestly, aiming his words at* DAVID *as well as at* COLONEL JARDINE.] It may be someone who fell suddenly in a moment of overwhelming temptation. This may be the first and last crime of someone — going about the house this morning showing an inscrutable face but hiding a heart that's quivering with shame and terror. If you track him with detectives you'll make a criminal of him; you'll push him into that damning underworld of society which is the only one open to the gaol-bird. If you let this thing rest now — persuade your detective it was a mistake, — say the necklace was only mislaid, and send him away — you may save a man.

[*He stands watching the effects of his words on* COLONEL JARDINE. DAVID

watches them furtively with painful anxiety.

COLONEL JARDINE.

You make me extremely uncomfortable. It's taking such a responsibility either way.

MOWBRAY.

Give him the chance.

COLONEL JARDINE.

But — he may be a regular thief — or he may be she.

MOWBRAY.

Then give *her* the chance.

COLONEL JARDINE.

I don't know that it's quite fair to Mrs. Gorringe not to sift this thing to the bottom.

MOWBRAY.

But, Colonel — if you take away a man's last chance of turning honest — think how uncomfortable you'll feel for the rest of your life.

COLONEL JARDINE.

I *am* thinking of that.

MOWBRAY.

Never to know another good night's rest.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Stop that, Mowbray.

MOWBRAY.

Colonel, you used to be the best-hearted man in your regiment. Your only fault, as a soldier, was that you were a bit too kind, but it's a fault that becomes you now you've retired.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Smiles, well pleased with himself.*] Oh, my dear fellow — what nonsense.

MOWBRAY.

Live up to your reputation!

COLONEL JARDINE.

Well, perhaps we'd better let this thing slide now.

MOWBRAY.

Shall I tell the detective? [*About to go and do so.* COLONEL JARDINE *stops him.*]

COLONEL JARDINE.

No. I'll tell him. I shall have to give him something for himself.

MOWBRAY.

Then we may consider it settled?

COLONEL JARDINE.

Yes.

[DAVID *can scarcely conceal his relief. He lays down his paper and goes out.*

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Still smiling under the influence of* MOWBRAY'S *flattery.*] I suppose I am a soft-hearted old duffer, but you know I'm a happier man for it.

MOWBRAY.

Of course you are; and what a rare combination that is. A soft heart and a hard brain.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Delighted.*] You've noticed the working of my brain!

MOWBRAY.

With amazement.

[MRS. GORRINGE *enters from the garden.*

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Cordially greeting* COLONEL JARDINE.] Good morning. Isn't it a lovely day?

MOWBRAY.

[*Cheerfully.*] Good morning, Mrs. Gorringe.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Bows coldly.*] Good morning.

COLONEL JARDINE.

So you've got your necklace back.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*In an aggrieved tone.*] That detective won't give it me. He says he is going to keep it himself.

MOWBRAY.

Only during the investigation.

MRS. GORRINGE.

That's what *he* says. How do I know he won't keep it altogether. I should never have sent for him if I'd known he was going to behave like that.

MOWBRAY.

[*Amused.*] Did you tell him so?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Not in so many words. But when he refused to give it up, I couldn't help saying "Oh!"

MOWBRAY.

By jove! that was severe.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Let me explain it to you.

MRS. GORRINGE.

I don't want explanations. I want my necklace.

MOWBRAY.

You'll get it back at once — [MRS. GORRINGE *turns quickly to* MOWBRAY.] — If you persuade the detective you mislaid it.

MRS. GORRINGE.

But I didn't mislay it.

MOWBRAY.

Couldn't you stretch the truth just about a quarter of an inch?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Why?

MOWBRAY.

To make it meet charity. Say you put your necklace there yourself. [*Points to the bowl.*]

MRS. GORRINGE.

He would think me a silly woman.

COLONEL JARDINE.

You see, Mrs. Gorringe, we don't want to prosecute anyone if we can avoid it. It has just occurred to me that the thief may be some poor fellow who wants to turn honest — so give him a chance.

MOWBRAY.

Don't trample on the Colonel's generous impulses.

MRS. GORRINGE.

But what about my other jewels?

COLONEL JARDINE.

Good gracious! You haven't lost anything else?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Not yet. But if I give him a chance I shall. He might take my rubies next, or my emerald lizard.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Becoming uncomfortable.*] To be sure, we might all lose our valuables. It wasn't entirely my suggestion to let the matter drop. In fact, it was Mowbray's.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*With marked disapproval.*] Then I consider that Captain Mowbray took a great deal upon himself.

MOWBRAY.

Don't trample on *my* generous impulses.

MRS. GORRINGE.

It's all very well for gentlemen to talk about being generous to thieves. They never have any

jewelry to speak of. [*Turns her back on* MOWBRAY.]

COLONEL JARDINE.

Mrs. Gorringe is very wise to think about her other jewels.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes, am I not wise?

MOWBRAY.

I don't think the emerald lizard is in danger, as, after this, Mrs. Gorringe is sure to be more careful what she leaves about.

MRS. GORRINGE.

I shall do exactly as I please about locking up my jewelry.

MOWBRAY.

[*Persuasively, to* MRS. GORRINGE.] Though *our* generous impulses don't move you, I'm sure, from what I know of you, your own will.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Trying to be dignified and firm.*] I beg you will not try to flatter me again. I don't like it. If Mr. Gorringe were here, I should certainly speak to him about it. [*Moves away from him.*]

COLONEL JARDINE.

Of course, Mrs. Gorringe must keep the detective if she wants to.

MOWBRAY.

[*Calculating the effect of his words on* MRS. GORRINGE.] I suppose there's nothing for it but to find the thief and try him — while Scotland Yard keeps the necklace.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Eh! — [*To* COLONEL JARDINE.] How long will that take?

COLONEL JARDINE.

Oh — a few weeks.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*In dismay.*] Weeks!

MOWBRAY.

Months — more likely.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Months!

COLONEL JARDINE.

Now, what shall we do?

MRS. GORRINGE.

I don't care what you do, as long as I get my necklace back. I must say I think the whole affair looks extremely fishy.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Well, let's go and interview this fellow Jernigan. [*Goes towards the door, then stops.*] But you know, I don't like this tarradiddling with Scotland Yard.

MOWBRAY.

[*Seriously.*] Nor do I, I don't like it at all. [*To* COLONEL JARDINE.] But, believe me, it's for the best. [COLONEL JARDINE *goes out.*] Believe me, Mrs. Gorringe, it is for the best.

[MRS. GORRINGE *tosses her head, takes up a newspaper and turns her back on* MOWBRAY. MOWBRAY *goes out.*]

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*With the newspaper in her hand.*] Just because he has been out to South Africa, he thinks he can teach us everything. They are so determined to hush it up, I suppose there'll be nothing about it in the paper. [MRS. JARDINE *enters.*] They aren't going to try and find out who stole my necklace.

MRS. JARDINE.

It seems funny *you* should know that, Mrs. Gorringe. I have not been consulted yet.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Captain Mowbray has persuaded Colonel Jardine to send the detective away.

MRS. JARDINE.

Since when did Captain Mowbray become the mistress of this house?

MRS. GORRINGE.

That's what *I* felt inclined to ask. I never met such a forward busybody as he is.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Bridling quickly.*] I'm sorry you don't like our guests, Mrs. Gorringe.

MRS. GORRINGE.

I don't blame *you,* dear Mrs. Jardine — not for anything. I'm sure you had no idea — when you invited me — that my necklace would be stolen. And I shan't let it make any difference between us. I shall still stay my week out.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*After a moment of dismay, says very politely.*] Of course, if you prefer to curtail your visit, I shall quite understand.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Oh, no, dear. I really have no ill feeling about it, but I suppose I shall never convince you if I don't stay on, so I'll even extend my visit a little if you like. [*Sits smiling on the sofa.*]

MRS. JARDINE.

[*With a forced smile.*] Oh, I hope you will.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Cheerfully.*] Of course I will.

[VICKY *enters, followed by* COLONEL JARDINE *with the necklace, which he gives to* MRS. GORRINGE.

VICKY.

Here it is!

MRS. GORRINGE.

Oh, thank you. [*Purrs over her necklace.*]

VICKY.

Let me see it. [*Tries to take the necklace in her hands.* MRS. GORRINGE *draws it away and holds it up for her to see at a safe distance.* VICKY *touches it with her finger as she says.*] There they are! There are the five drops in front and there's the pearl clasp.

MRS. JARDINE.

Christopher, have you sent the detective away? [*Holds up her hand to prevent him answering.*] Wait! Before you tell me, perhaps you'd better go and ask Captain Mowbray's permission.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Good-naturedly.*] Nonsense, Emily! I told

Jernigan if he'd like to stay till noon I'd show him round the place.

MRS. JARDINE.

A very superfluous attention.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Smiling conceitedly.*] Oh, well. It never does us any harm to be good-natured; we feel all the happier for it. He'll be so pleased he won't expect a present.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Purring over her necklace.*] I do wish I knew who stole you.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*With decision.*] There isn't any doubt at all in my mind.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Who?

MRS. JARDINE.

Pipkin. Nothing will ever convince me otherwise.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Unconscious that he is quoting* MOWBRAY. *He thinks it is his own sentiment.*] It never seems quite fair to suppose it's one of the servants just because you've got no evidence that it isn't.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Obstinately.*] I shall certainly discharge Pipkin.

COLONEL JARDINE.

We have no proof against her.

MRS. JARDINE.

I have all the proof I want. [*Turns to the others and speaks as if she were delivering a strong argument.*] If she had no motive for concealing the necklace, she'd have found it when she did the room. That proves that if she is innocent — she doesn't do the rooms.

VICKY.

[*Giggling.*] Oh, mother, you are so funny.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Thoughtfully.*] In spite of what Mowbray said, I think we ought to get to the root of this matter.

MRS. GORRINGE.

So do I.

COLONEL JARDINE.

If Isabel had left it to me, instead of sending for a detective on her own account, I've no doubt I could have sifted this thing down myself. It only needs a little cross-examination. [*He sets about his cross-examination in a quick, alert way*

which he thinks is business-like and penetrating. MRS. GORRINGE *pays the deepest attention.* MRS. JARDINE *superciliously ignores them. He addresses* MRS. GORRINGE, *speaking rapidly.*] Now, you say you saw the necklace for the last time the night before it was lost, but you didn't see it in the morning. No. You saw it again in the afternoon — that is, you saw it wasn't there in the afternoon. Is that right?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Without waiting for* MRS. GORRINGE *to say more, shoots his next question at* MRS. JARDINE.] Now, then, where were you? [*Waits for her to reply. She ignores him by turning her chair with its back to him.*]

MRS. GORRINGE.

Mrs. Jardine was here.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Turns quickly to* MRS. GORRINGE.] Oh, she was here.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes. On this sofa. [*Pats the sofa.*]

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Addressing* MRS. GORRINGE *in the same alert*

manner.] Oh — well, now. You didn't see it practically all yesterday, so it might have been taken any time yesterday up to the time you found it was taken. You can't tell. [*Dwells on next line as if he were making an important point.*] But you *did* see it the night before?

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Deeply impressed.*] Yes.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Well, now — we've got that far. [*Turns suddenly to* MRS. JARDINE.] When did you last see it? [*She still ignores him.*] Emily, when did you last see Mrs. Gorringe's necklace? [*She slowly changes her position, elaborately ignoring them.*]

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*After a pause, during which she and* COLONEL JARDINE *both watch* MRS. JARDINE.] Please say when you last saw it.

[*A look of irritation passes over* MRS. JARDINE'S *face when* MRS. GORRINGE *speaks.*

COLONEL JARDINE.

Emily, we are trying to sift this thing down. I want you to say when you last saw Mrs. Gorringe's necklace.

MRS. GORRINGE.

We can't go on till you do.

[*A long pause, during which* COLONEL JARDINE *and* MRS. GORRINGE *watch* MRS. JARDINE, *waiting for her reply. She shows signs of growing impatience.*

COLONEL JARDINE.

Emily.

[MRS. JARDINE *begins to writhe with annoyance.*

MRS. GORRINGE.

Please say, Mrs. Jardine.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Unable to curb herself any longer, rises and rounds on* MRS. GORRINGE.] Hold your tongue.

[MRS. GORRINGE *utters a scream of surprise and indignation. Then there is dead silence, during which they all remain perfectly still, no one looking at anyone else.* ISABEL *enters, looks round in surprise. They all remain still as waxworks.*

ISABEL.

What's happened?

MRS. JARDINE.

Your father thinks he was cut out for a detective, and as if I wasn't on the rack long enough yesterday, he must begin goading me with questions again this morning.

MRS. GORRINGE.

I'm sure Colonel Jardine didn't mean to goad you.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Turning angrily to* MRS. GORRINGE.] If you'd lock your things up properly, instead of letting them lie about all over the house, we should have been saved all this turmoil.

[*They are all shocked as before.* MRS. GORRINGE *utters another scream.* ISABEL *tries to calm her mother.*

ISABEL.

Mother!

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Refuses to be calmed.*] Yes, I mean it. My house was a happy home till *she* came. Now I can't tell it from a police court.

[MRS. GORRINGE *screams again. The other three all remonstrate at once with* MRS. JARDINE.

ISABEL *and* VICKY.

[*Together.*] Mother!

COLONEL JARDINE.

My dear!

MRS. JARDINE.

I was surrounded by a loving family, and now

see them turn on me. [*To* MRS. GORRINGE.] And it's all *you!*

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Wildly.*] Do you know what you are saying?

ISABEL.

[*To* MRS. JARDINE.] Don't say any more.

MRS. JARDINE.

Oh, of course, you all take Mrs. Gorringe's side and turn on me. That's just what I should have expected of you.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Rises and tries to assume dignity as she addresses* MRS. JARDINE.] I *could* say a good deal. I *might* say how unsympathetic you have been all along about my necklace, but I think it would be more dignified simply to draw my visit to a close.

[*Goes out.*

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Muttering after her.*] About time, too.

ISABEL.

[*To* VICKY, *as* MRS. GORRINGE *goes out.*] You go with Mrs. Gorringe.

[VICKY *goes out after* MRS. GORRINGE.

ISABEL.

Now, mother, do pull yourself together and apologise to her.

MRS. JARDINE.

Apologise? She'll want to stay her week out.

ISABEL.

You're breaking all the laws of hospitality.

MRS. JARDINE.

Whoever made the laws of hospitality didn't know Mrs. Gorringe. I'd believe anything of that woman. I'd like to know what she was before Mr. Gorringe married her — if they *are* married.

ISABEL.

[*Protesting.*] Mother!

COLONEL JARDINE.

She said she was a Miss Rose Pilkington of Ipswich.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Derisively.*] Ipswich! A shop-keeper's daughter, I suppose. Chemist, I should think. Can't you see the sign over the shop door, "Pilkington. Chemist"? Gold letters on a black ground. [*Having really convinced herself that* MRS. GORRINGE *was a chemist's daughter.*] That accounts for her lack of breeding. No lady would

quarrel with her hostess. But I suppose she can't be expected to know better — poor thing — with *her* upbringing.

[VICKY *enters quickly.*

VICKY.

Mrs. Gorringe says she won't stay another minute.

[MRS. GORRINGE *enters. Her only change of dress is that she now wears her hat.* MRS. JARDINE *turns her back on* MRS. GORRINGE.

MRS. GORRINGE.

No, I couldn't think of it. I flew upstairs and opened the wardrobe and simply snatched the first hat I saw. I didn't even stop to get a veil. Then I flew down again, and, now, though it's damp under foot this morning, I'm going out in my house shoes. [*Goes to* COLONEL JARDINE, *extending her hand cordially.*] Good-bye. [*Shakes hands cordially with* ISABEL.] Good-bye.

ISABEL.

But you aren't going to the train that way.

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Pleasantly.*] Oh, no; I'm only going to Miss Potts'.

[MRS. GORRINGE *and* MRS. JARDINE *look at each other, up and down; then turn*

away contemptuously. MRS. GORRINGE *goes out, followed by* VICKY.

MRS. JARDINE.

Now, let us breathe again. I feel as if we'd had some infectious disease in the house.

[MRS. JARDINE *goes out.*

ISABEL.

How did it all begin?

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Scratches his head, puzzled.*] I hardly know. Your mother is so uncertain. She answered the detective's questions all right. I don't see why she wouldn't answer mine. I was just trying to sift this thing down with a little cross-examination. You know I think we ought to find out who took that necklace.

ISABEL.

So do I.

[JERNIGAN *enters.*

JERNIGAN.

I'm ready to be shown round, if it's convenient to you.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Oh, yes. Sit down a minute. [JERNIGAN *and* COLONEL JARDINE *sit on the sofa.* ISABEL *at a*

little distance.] I was just saying I think I ought to know who took that necklace.

JERNIGAN.

[*Surprised.*] I understood you to say it was only mislaid.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Oh, yes — so I did, didn't I? But my wife doesn't agree with me. She still believes that the housemaid, Pipkin, is the culprit. She's going to discharge her.

JERNIGAN.

[*Deliberately.*] If it was stolen — I don't think it was by one of your servants.

ISABEL.

Mr. Jernigan evidently suspects someone.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Then speak out.

JERNIGAN.

All the evidence I have been able to gather points against one of your guests.

ISABEL.

Oh!

COLONEL JARDINE.

Good gracious! But we only have — well,

there's David Cairn — we've always known him; besides, he was away when it was stolen.

JERNIGAN.

I don't suspect Mr. Cairn.

COLONEL JARDINE.

It couldn't be Mrs. Gorringe. She wouldn't steal her own necklace.

JERNIGAN.

You have one other guest.

COLONEL JARDINE.

You can't mean Mowbray.

JERNIGAN.

Last night Captain Mowbray attempted to leave the house quietly with a bag. Soon afterwards he was found in this room alone with the necklace in his hands, wrapped in a handkerchief, the duplicate of which was in his bag, and that was open.

ISABEL.

But he found the necklace in that bowl.

JERNIGAN.

[*Looking at* ISABEL.] Did you see him take it out?

ISABEL.

Of course I know that in your work you have to judge by external evidence, but in this case I am sure it has misled you. Captain Mowbray is an old friend of ours.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Wait a minute, Isabel. This is certainly very strange.

ISABEL.

But, father — you've known him for years.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Yes, but — he's been at me just now, urging me with all his might to send you [*looking at* JERNIGAN] away and have no more enquiry.

JERNIGAN.

H'm. That doesn't improve his case.

ISABEL.

What motive could he have for stealing jewelry? He's a rich man.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*To* ISABEL.] How did he become rich?

ISABEL.

[*Uncertainly.*] Mining — didn't he?

COLONEL JARDINE.

I don't know. [*To* JERNIGAN.] A few years ago he had nothing. Then he went to South Africa and came back rich. It was only yesterday afternoon he called himself an adventurer.

ISABEL.

A good proof that he isn't one.

JERNIGAN.

Mrs. Gorringe told me she knew something against him. When I questioned her, she refused to say what it was. But she admitted that since an interview she had with him last evening her opinion of him had undergone a change.

COLONEL JARDINE.

She seemed very huffy with him just now.

ISABEL.

[*Losing her temper.*] Mrs. Gorringe is a fool.

COLONEL JARDINE.

That's no way to argue, Isabel. You women are so emotional. You won't stop and reason.

JERNIGAN.

Do you know when Captain Mowbray discovered you had a detective in the house?

COLONEL JARDINE.

Yes, it was after dinner. I heard my wife tell him. And — yes — [*turns excitedly to* JERNIGAN] it was immediately after that I caught him escaping.

ISABEL.

[*With a smothered exclamation of indignation, which attracts their attention.*] Oh!

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Turning to* ISABEL.] Do you know why he wanted to leave in such a hurry — without a word to any of us?

ISABEL.

No. But I think it's shameful to make such charges against a man like Captain Mowbray.

COLONEL JARDINE.

I'm not going to make a charge against him.

ISABEL.

Then you ought to, and give him a chance to clear himself.

COLONEL JARDINE.

No, no. Better to hush it up. I don't want to do him any harm, and he'd find it very difficult to explain away so much evidence.

ISABEL.

What's evidence when you *know* a man?

COLONEL JARDINE.

You argue just like your mother.

ISABEL.

Mother's going to discharge Pipkin. If only to stop that you ought to tell Captain Mowbray what you've been saying, and if *you* don't, *I* shall.

[MOWBRAY *enters.*

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Nodding awkwardly and trying to appear friendly.*] Hello, Mowbray. [*Quickly, to* JERNIGAN.] Now, if you're ready I'll show you round the place.

JERNIGAN.

[*Rising, as he says aside to* COLONEL JARDINE.] I should like to question you further about Captain Mowbray.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Urging* JERNIGAN *towards the window.*] Yes, outside. She'll get me into trouble with him if I stay here.

[COLONEL JARDINE *and* JERNIGAN *go out hurriedly into the garden.*

ISABEL.

Can you tell me why you wanted to leave us so suddenly last night?

MOWBRAY.

Didn't you guess?

ISABEL.

[*Innocently.*] No.

MOWBRAY.

Then I mustn't tell you.

ISABEL.

I only ask you because — well, nobody seems to know — only they suspect — oh, dreadful things.

MOWBRAY.

Who do?

ISABEL.

Father and that detective. I may as well tell you at once. You know you went to father this morning and urged him to send the detective away, and you were found with the necklace last night, and so they think you — [*Halts, not knowing how to express herself inoffensively.*]

MOWBRAY.

[*Looks at her, then says deliberately.*] They think *I* stole it?

[ISABEL *nods. He looks away from her slowly, stands still, looking very grave.*

ISABEL.

[*Watches him anxiously before she says.*] You know I don't believe a word of it.

MOWBRAY.

[*Presses her hand gratefully, not looking at her as he says.*] What do they say?

ISABEL.

You know the way *men* argue.

MOWBRAY.

Yes, yes!

ISABEL.

They go by little bits of evidence — pocket-handkerchiefs and bags and things of that sort, instead of by what they *know*. They've piled up a whole mountain of what they call evidence — things you've said and done at different times, probably without thinking — and when I tell them it's all ridiculous, they call me emotional. Oh, I'm glad I'm not a man!

MOWBRAY.

Are they going to take any sort of proceedings?

ISABEL.

I don't know. But you will clear yourself, won't you?

MOWBRAY.

I must.

ISABEL.

I can't bear to hear such things said of you.

MOWBRAY.

I will clear myself.

ISABEL.

That's right. [*Moves away.*] Then there's another thing. [*He looks askance at her.*] Mother's going to discharge one of the maids.

MOWBRAY.

Oh!

ISABEL.

There's no evidence against her. It's all so silly. Father suspecting you, and mother, Pipkin. Aren't people dreadful?

[DAVID *enters.* ISABEL *turns to him, smiling affectionately.*

ISABEL.

Well, David, have you finished packing? [*Turns to* MOWBRAY.] Now, do go and see them. They are somewhere in the garden.

MOWBRAY.

[*Quietly, but firmly.*] I want to speak to David first.

ISABEL.

No, afterwards. David and I haven't long to be together. He'll have to go to his train soon.

MOWBRAY.

I must speak to David now.

DAVID.

Won't it do afterwards, Frank?

MOWBRAY.

[*With authority.*] No, now.

ISABEL.

[*Impressed with the authority of his tone.*] If it's so important. Don't keep him long. [*Goes out.*]

MOWBRAY.

Since you went out they've been trying again to solve the mystery of who stole the necklace.

DAVID.

[*Trying to conceal his dismay.*] I thought they were going to let it drop.

MOWBRAY.

Mrs. Jardine is going to discharge one of the maids.

DAVID.

Oh, I'm sorry.

MOWBRAY.

[*Carelessly, to put him off his guard.*] Why are you sorry?

DAVID.

Well — if she's innocent.

MOWBRAY.

I didn't say she was. [*Goes nearer to* DAVID.] I suppose you don't know if she's innocent or guilty?

DAVID.

Of course not. How should I?

MOWBRAY.

Then you couldn't be blamed for letting her go away with a ruined character?

DAVID.

[*Uneasy under* MOWBRAY'S *gaze.*] Of course I couldn't. I say, you must excuse me. Isabel is waiting for me. [*Goes towards the door.*]

MOWBRAY.

The Colonel suspects someone else.

DAVID.

[*Stopping at the door.*] Who?

MOWBRAY.

Me.

DAVID.

[*Taken aback.*] You? But — [*coming towards* MOWBRAY] can't you clear yourself?

MOWBRAY.

How do you know I'm not guilty?

DAVID.

That's absurd.

MOWBRAY.

You say you don't know how the necklace got in that bowl?

DAVID.

I said I didn't know it was there.

MOWBRAY.

I did — according to circumstantial evidence. You'd think me rather a cad if I said nothing and let the poor girl be ruined — wouldn't you?

DAVID.

[*Reluctantly.*] Yes.

MOWBRAY.

When I saw you looking there — for matches — By the way, what did you want a match for?

DAVID.

To light my cigarette.

MOWBRAY.

You hadn't got one.

DAVID.

I was getting a match first.

MOWBRAY.

I never heard of anyone getting his match before he got his cigarette.

DAVID.

I can't explain the reason for every little thing I do.

MOWBRAY.

[*Assuming an easy manner, to put* DAVID *off his guard.*] If they come and ask me awkward questions, I suppose you wouldn't mind me telling them why I looked in the bowl.

DAVID.

[*Uneasily.*] No — only — [*Pauses.*]

MOWBRAY.

Only what?

DAVID.

I was only thinking it might make it look a bit queer for me.

MOWBRAY.

Why? Even if you'd been found with the neck-

lace in your hands, as *I* was, you'd be beyond suspicion.

DAVID.

Yes — I hope so.

MOWBRAY.

Yes, because you left the house before it was last seen, and didn't come back till after it was stolen.

DAVID.

Yes — I know.

MOWBRAY.

[*Sternly.*] You told me you were in the house yesterday afternoon when there was nobody about.

DAVID.

[*Taken aback, but still trying to bluff.*] Well? That's no proof of anything.

MOWBRAY.

I'm not going to have my character blackened for something I didn't do.

DAVID.

But I shouldn't think they'll charge you with it?

MOWBRAY.

They'll gossip about it. I may have to bring an action for slander.

DAVID.

I shouldn't do that.

MOWBRAY.

You'll be abroad when I do.

DAVID.

What have *I* got to do with it?

MOWBRAY.

I thought I might count on you to vouch for my good character.

DAVID.

Yes — of course.

MOWBRAY.

Then let us go out and see the detective now. [*Goes towards the window, then stops and turns to* DAVID.] Will you come?

DAVID.

No.

MOWBRAY.

Why not?

DAVID.

You needn't take any notice of this. They won't do anything, and it'll all die down soon.

MOWBRAY.

[*Looking steadily at* DAVID.] Are you quite satisfied to have the maid discharged?

DAVID.

[*Losing his self-control.*] Why do you look at me like that? You keep your eyes on me every minute — as if you suspected me.

MOWBRAY.

You've denied all knowledge of it.

DAVID.

Isn't that enough?

MOWBRAY.

Have I always found you so truthful? [DAVID *quails before him, then sinks into an arm-chair.*] David, if you confess to me now anything that incriminates you — I'll do what I can to shield you. Unless these charges increase till I'm forced to defend myself before the world, I'll take no notice of them, although Isabel has urged me to dispel them, and God knows what she'll think of me if I don't. Now, although they may have enough evidence to arrest me, they'll need a good deal more to convict me. This will be a big case, — the kind of case the whole country watches and reads about. You'll be drawn into it, because I shall be compelled to explain why I looked in

that bowl. It will not be difficult to find witnesses to testify what train you came down by yesterday — not the one you said. It may not be hard to find someone who saw you enter the house while we were all out, for I shall not scruple to say in my own defence that you had told me you were here then, knowing that if you are innocent you have nothing to fear. Then they'll look into our past lives — mine and yours. They'll examine your record to see if you have a reputation for truth and honesty—

DAVID.

[*Completely breaking down.*] Frank! Don't go on! I did it. Oh, why did you tell that story? It was that made me think of it — that story about a man who stole some diamonds and was never found out. It stuck in my mind so. I'd gone to pieces anyway. I'd been drinking and lost all my money — and I was so jealous of you and Isabel. When I came in yesterday I could see you both from my window — laughing together. When I came out of my room I passed Mrs. Gorringe's door. It was open a little way, and I remembered her saying how she left her things about, and that story about the man who was never found out came back and possessed me. When I pushed the door I could see the things lying there — and it seemed so easy. [*He covers his face with his hands, then proceeds more calmly.*] I came to my senses as soon as I saw you all. I thought I could get it back without anyone knowing. I prayed for

the chance to put it back. I promised Isabel I'd make a fresh start — and I will — I will, — if you won't tell.

MOWBRAY.

I'll shield you on one condition. You must give up Isabel.

DAVID.

[*Suddenly scared, says hurriedly.*] I can't.

MOWBRAY.

You can't marry her *now*.

DAVID.

She won't know — no one will know.

MOWBRAY.

That's not it. Whether you and I know or whether the whole world knows — you fell because you are dishonest. That is why you must give her up.

DAVID.

I know I'm unworthy of her, but — I'm not all bad.

MOWBRAY.

I know that. I don't ask you to be perfect. We all have our faults. But it isn't the number of his sins that mark a man — it's the kind.

DAVID.

[*Humbly.*] Don't you think — with this experience — I can be different?

MOWBRAY.

The curse of degeneracy is always there, in your mind and in your heart. It's like a taint in the blood. It warps your judgment, poisons your impulses, lures you into constant danger.

DAVID.

But with Isabel to help me —

MOWBRAY.

To help *you* — she — to give up *her* life to *you* who bring her only shame and sorrow — to expose *her* sweet nature day after day to *your* contamination — to make her the mother of *your* children. No, it's not to be thought of — you must not marry her.

DAVID.

I can't give her up.

MOWBRAY.

Then she must know the truth. If you don't break your engagement before you leave this house I shall tell her that —

ISABEL.

[*Calls outside.*] David!

[ISABEL *enters.* MOWBRAY *breaks off suddenly in his sentence as she enters.*

MOWBRAY.

[*Looks at* ISABEL, *then says to* DAVID.] Tell her.

[MOWBRAY *goes out into the garden.*

ISABEL.

David, it's nearly time for you to go. [DAVID *goes towards* ISABEL, *looks at her, breaks down and sinks on the sofa, sobbing.* ISABEL *comforts him.*] Don't, dear, don't. We shan't be parted very long.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Knocks on the door and calls without.*] David! It's time to go.

ISABEL.

They're calling you.

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*Knocking and calling as before.*] You'll miss the train.

[ISABEL *draws* DAVID *gently towards the door. He folds her in his arms in a long embrace.*

DAVID.

Isabel!

ISABEL.

Good-bye! [*He goes out; she goes towards the window, looking after him and crying.*]

[MOWBRAY *enters quietly. She does not see him. He stands and watches her sorrowfully as she waves her handkerchief out of the window, trying to smile. She turns from the window and sees* MOWBRAY.

ISABEL.

[*Drying her eyes.*] I'm glad you know about David and me. I can talk to you about him. It's so terrible to say good-bye. [*Dries her eyes and recovers her composure gradually.*] But it's only for a little while. If they keep him long out there I shall go to join him. [MOWBRAY *betrays increasing dismay as she continues.*] I feel content about him now. I think it's going to be all right.

[JERNIGAN *enters, with an open letter in his hand.*

JERNIGAN.

I've just received this letter from Mrs. Gorringe. She desires me to continue my investigation.

MOWBRAY.

[*To* JERNIGAN.] I hear you have circumstantial evidence against me.

ISABEL.

I'm glad you have this chance to clear yourself. [*Goes towards the door.*]

JERNIGAN.

[*To* ISABEL.] Please don't go.

MOWBRAY.

I don't wish to explain before her.

JERNIGAN.

I need her evidence. [*To* ISABEL.] If this matter is brought into court you will be the most important witness. Please remember this, and answer me now as carefully as if you were on oath.

ISABEL.

Yes.

JERNIGAN.

What is your Christian name?

ISABEL.

Isabel.

JERNIGAN.

Single?

ISABEL.

Married.

MOWBRAY.

[*Startled.*] Married?

ISABEL.

I was married this morning at the Registry Office to David Cairn.

JERNIGAN.

Last evening when I came into this room and saw you receiving the stolen necklace from Captain Mowbray, did you see him take it from that bowl?

ISABEL.

No.

JERNIGAN.

Thank you. [*To* MOWBRAY.] What is your explanation?

MOWBRAY.

[*Looking at* ISABEL.] Married! [*To* JERNIGAN.] I — can't explain —

JERNIGAN.

I must press you to do so, or it will be my painful duty to take you into custody.

MOWBRAY.

[*To himself.*] Married! [*Turns to* JERNIGAN.] I decline to explain.

CURTAIN.

THE FOURTH ACT

SCENE.—*The same as Acts I, II and III. About one minute has elapsed since Act III.*

ISABEL *is alone, distracted with anxiety. She draws her hand across her eyes, rings the bell, goes to the writing-table, sits and writes a note, places it in an envelope and seals it.*

[CHARLES *enters.*

ISABEL.

[*Addressing the envelope as she speaks.*] Take this to Mrs. Gorringe at once. She's at Miss Potts' — just over the way. [*Gives the letter to* CHARLES.]

CHARLES.

Yes, miss.

[CHARLES *goes out with the letter, holding the door open as he goes to allow* COLONEL *and* MRS. JARDINE *to enter. Their faces express solemn amazement.*

MRS. JARDINE.

We've just heard. You could knock me down with a feather. [*She looks at the others.*] Hasn't anyone anything to say?

COLONEL JARDINE.

[*In a superior tone.*] I'm not as surprised as you are. I suspected it was Mowbray for some time.

MRS. JARDINE.

You always did know before hand — when it's all over. You weren't the only one who suspected, either. Don't you remember me saying the day he came, "There's something I don't like about that man's eyes"?

COLONEL JARDINE.

No; I don't remember you saying anything of the kind.

MRS. JARDINE.

Well, I thought it. I've heard of people entertaining angels unawares, but I never heard of anyone entertaining a thief and a chemist's daughter unawares.

COLONEL JARDINE.

I wonder what we'd better do.

MRS. JARDINE.

There's nothing for *us* to do. I suppose Black Maria will call for him in the usual way.

ISABEL.

Father, I've just sent a note to Mrs. Gorringe to ask her not to prosecute him.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Do you think she won't want to now?

ISABEL.

I hope she won't. We shall find out when she comes.

MRS. JARDINE.

When who comes?

ISABEL.

Mrs. Gorringe.

MRS. JARDINE.

I'm not going to have that woman coming here.

ISABEL.

Mother, this is no time to think about trifles.

MRS. JARDINE.

Trifles! Do you call it a trifle when a shopkeeper's daughter insults your mother?

COLONEL JARDINE.

My dear, you don't *know* that she's a shopkeeper's daughter.

MRS. JARDINE.

You don't know what she isn't.

ISABEL.

Captain Mowbray will be taken away by the detective directly. If you don't care about *him,* I suppose you don't want to be mixed up in a public scandal. It rests with Mrs. Gorringe to prevent that.

[CHARLES *enters.*

CHARLES.

[*Announcing.*] Mrs. Gorringe.

MRS. JARDINE.

Not at home.

[CHARLES *turns to go.*

COLONEL JARDINE.

Wait a minute, Charles. [*Goes to his wife.*] My dear, Mrs. Gorringe knows something else against Mowbray. Now we ought to find out what it is, so I think you'd better apologise.

MRS. JARDINE.

I shall not apologise.

COLONEL JARDINE.

We shall never find out what she knows if you don't.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*After a moment's reflection says to* CHARLES.] At home.

[CHARLES *goes out.*

COLONEL JARDINE.

As it may be something of a private nature, I'll leave you and Isabel to get it out of her —

[COLONEL JARDINE *goes out into the garden. Enter* CHARLES.

CHARLES.

Mrs. Gorringe.

[MRS. GORRINGE *enters, a little nervous as to how she will be received.* CHARLES *goes out.*

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Meeting* MRS. GORRINGE *with great cordiality.*] Dear Mrs. Gorringe, I told Isabel to ask you to come so that I might tell you how much I regret our quarrel.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Dear Mrs. Jardine, it was all my fault.

MRS. JARDINE.

No, no. *I* was entirely to blame.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Oh, now, I won't hear you say that.

MRS. JARDINE.

You must try to forgive me.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Indeed, it is you who must try to forgive me, may I say Emily?

MRS. JARDINE.

I wish you would — er — [*Puzzles a moment.*] What's *your* name?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Rose.

MRS. JARDINE.

What a pretty name! [*Sits on the sofa, drawing* MRS. GORRINGE *down beside her.*] Now, Rosie — what's the other thing you know against this Captain Mowbray?

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Verging on a nervous breakdown throughout the scene.*] I'll tell you presently.

ISABEL.

Are you going to prosecute Captain Mowbray?

MRS. GORRINGE.

I'll come to that directly. I can't tell you what I felt when I got Isabel's letter. My head all went dizzy and my heart fluttered like a bird.

MRS. JARDINE.

You can't have been surprised to hear this man Mowbray had been arrested, after what you *knew*.

MRS. GORRINGE.

I've hardly had time to realize if I was surprised or not. My knees are quivering like aspen leaves.

ISABEL.

But you won't prosecute, will you?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Give me a little time to get over the shock. I was in a state of palpitation anyway, — after the words we had. [MRS. JARDINE *pats* MRS. GORRINGE *forgivingly*.] I'd run all the way to Miss Potts's — perhaps not quite *all* the way — but most of the way — in nothing but my house-shoes and a hat. Oh, dear! It's beginning again. [*Puts her hand to her heart and closes her eyes.*]

ISABEL.

The salts. [*Takes a bottle of salts from a table.*]

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Recovers in a moment and goes on volubly.*] When I got to Miss Potts's I rang the bell. Jane came to the door, or was it Minnie? My head's going round and round so I can't even remember who came to the door.

ISABEL.

[*Exasperated.*] Never mind who came to the door.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Oh, don't say that, Isabel. My nerves are so upset. There! You've made it begin again. [*Closes her eyes and lays her hand on her heart.*]

MRS. JARDINE.

We shall never find out what Mowbray did, at this rate.

[ISABEL *applies the salts to* MRS. GORRINGE'S *nose so suddenly that* MRS. GORRINGE *screams.*

MRS. GORRINGE.

Thank you, dear. I believe I should have swooned if I hadn't had that sniff.

MRS. JARDINE.

Now, tell us about Mowbray.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes. Where was I? Oh. After I'd written that letter to Mr. Jernigan we went upstairs.

MRS. JARDINE.

Who? You and Mowbray?

MRS. GORRINGE.

No. Miss Potts and I. Miss Potts poured out some water and said, "There, dear, bathe your eyes." And I said, "Thank you, dear, and if you could lend me a comb I should be so grateful, as I've brought nothing with me."

ISABEL.

[*Exasperated.*] Mrs. Gorringe!

MRS. GORRINGE.

Don't interrupt me, dear; I shall lose the thread.

ISABEL.

There's no time to waste. Are you going to prosecute or are you not?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Now I've lost it. I don't know where I was.

MRS. JARDINE.

You were in Miss Potts's bedroom.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes. And while I was trying to make myself fit to be seen — all of a sudden —

MRS. JARDINE.

Mowbray came in.

MRS. GORRINGE.

No — not Mowbray.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Exasperated.*] Well, where does Mowbray come in?

MRS. GORRINGE.

I'll tell you presently. I can't speak more than one word at once. Minnie or Jane, or whichever of them it was, came in with Isabel's letter. I can't tell you what I felt. My head went all dizzy and my heart fluttered like a bird.

MRS. JARDINE.

Yes, yes. [*Losing her temper.*] And your knees quivered like aspen leaves. Oh —

[*Moves away from* MRS. GORRINGE.

ISABEL.

I'll get the detective to her.

[ISABEL *goes out quickly.*

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Looking after* ISABEL.] I'm afraid Isabel doesn't like me. [*Rising.*] I really must go to the chemist and get a nerve tonic.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Pricking up her ears.*] The chemist?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes. I wonder which is the best one to go to.

MRS. JARDINE.

I should have thought *you* could tell *me* that.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Why?

MRS. JARDINE.

Never mind the chemist; let us prepare a little statement for the detective. [*Sits at the writing-table, takes a pen and paper.*]

MRS. GORRINGE.

Oh no, no. If I have to undergo any more of those searching questions, I shall lose my reason.

MRS. JARDINE.

It won't take long. [*Writing as she speaks.*] Birthplace Ipswich. [*Turns to* MRS. GORRINGE.] Father's name?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Arnold Pilkington.

MRS. JARDINE.

Occupation? [*Looks searchingly at* MRS. GORRINGE.]

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Losing her head.*] What do they call them? — Che — Che —

MRS. JARDINE.

Chemist?

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*On her dignity.*] No. County Councillor. Papa's the Mayor of Ipswich.

[ISABEL *enters, followed by* JERNIGAN. *About the same time,* COLONEL JARDINE *enters from the garden.*

ISABEL.

[*To* MRS. GORRINGE.] Please tell Mr. Jernigan if you intend to prosecute or not.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Of course I don't want anyone to go to prison.

ISABEL.

[*To* JERNIGAN.] There! You see! She won't!

JERNIGAN.

[*To* MRS. GORRINGE.] In your letter you instructed me to arrest whomever I suspected.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes — because — [*Laughing as she goes to-*

wards MRS. JARDINE.] You know you said they suspected *you.*

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Indignantly.*] Me? What next!

MRS. GORRINGE.

[*Laughing as she explains to* JERNIGAN.] I ought to tell you that Mrs. Jardine and I had a tiff this morning, and — well, I was so put out I felt ready to do anything to annoy her. [*Turns to* MRS. JARDINE. *They laugh together.* MRS. JARDINE'S *laughter is a good deal forced.*]

JERNIGAN.

This question of prosecution doesn't affect Mrs. Jardine, but Captain Mowbray.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Ah! He was very rude to me.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Eagerly.*] Ask her what he did, Mr. Jernigan.

JERNIGAN.

What is it you know against him?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Well — we were standing about there — no, there. [*Points to the carpet near her feet.*]

MRS. JARDINE.

Who? You and Miss Potts?

MRS. GORRINGE.

No. Captain Mowbray and I.

MRS. JARDINE.

We've come to Mowbray at last.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Don't interrupt her. Now, what did he say?

MRS. GORRINGE.

You promise you won't tell Mr. Gorringe?

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Wheedling* MRS. GORRINGE.] Now, Rosie — trust Emily.

[MRS. GORRINGE *pats* MRS. JARDINE *on the cheek.* MRS. JARDINE *is intensely annoyed by this familiarity.*

MRS. GORRINGE.

Well —

COLONEL JARDINE.

Out with it. We're all waiting to hear what he said.

MRS. GORRINGE.

I don't remember what *he* said, but *I* said —

OMNES.

Yes — yes — well?

MRS. GORRINGE.

"I hope I shall never forget my duty to Mr. Gorringe and the children."

[*Draws herself up and looks round at the others, very well satisfied with herself.*

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Eagerly.*] What had he done?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Nothing.

MRS. JARDINE.

Well — what *did* he do?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Nothing.

MRS. JARDINE.

Is that the whole story?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Yes.

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Turning angrily from* MRS. GORRINGE, *and marching towards her husband.*] And you made me apologise to her to hear that.

[*All their backs are turned to* MRS. GOR-

RINGE, *but she does not perceive this as she rambles on.*

MRS. GORRINGE.

That shows you the kind of a man he is — He's the sort of man to lead a woman on and make her say things that — well, I don't think I know you well enough to explain — [*She looks at the others and sees that no one is paying any attention to her.*] If you've all done with me, I'll go.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Don't go, Mrs. Gorringe. Now that you and Emily have kissed and made friends, why don't you stay and finish your visit?

MRS. JARDINE.

[*Pulls the Colonel's coat-tails, as she interposes herself between him and* MRS. GORRINGE.] Christopher! How inconsiderate of you! Of course, dear Rosie, we should love to have you with us, but I'm sure you'd have hysterics all night long in that room.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Oh, I know I should. Did I ever tell you how I came in and closed the door? It's as if the dressing-table were there — [*Points to the window.*] No, there. [*Points somewhere else.*] And the door — [*Coming towards the door.*]

COLONEL *and* MRS. JARDINE.

[*Quickly, together.*] Yes, you showed us.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Oh, of course. You were in the room when I was telling Mr. Jernigan. Good-bye. [*Shakes hands with* MRS. JARDINE.]

MRS. JARDINE.

Good-bye.

MRS. GORRINGE.

Good-bye. [*Shakes hands with* COLONEL JARDINE.]

COLONEL JARDINE.

Good-bye.

ISABEL.

Are you going back to Miss Potts?

MRS. GORRINGE.

Oh, no, dear. I'm going back to Mr. Gorringe and the children.

[MRS. GORRINGE *goes out.*

MRS. JARDINE.

Come, Christopher, let us speed the parting guest.

[MRS. JARDINE *goes out after* MRS. GORRINGE.

COLONEL JARDINE.

Certainly. You always were a model hostess.

[COLONEL JARDINE *goes out after* MRS. JARDINE *and* MRS. GORRINGE.

JERNIGAN.

I must go back to Captain Mowbray.

ISABEL.

As Mrs. Gorringe knows nothing against him, and won't prosecute — you can release him, can't you?

JERNIGAN.

If she won't prosecute — I must.

ISABEL.

Oh, no.

JERNIGAN.

I believe a felony has been committed. Captain Mowbray has practically confessed. It is my duty to arrest him.

ISABEL.

But you'll ruin him — you will, indeed. I know he didn't do it. The necklace is found. There's no harm done.

JERNIGAN.

[*Unmoved, but not harshly.*] My work accus-

toms me to scenes like this. I have seen so many women weep and pray for mercy that I have become hardened. [*Turns to the door.*]

ISABEL.

[*Quietly.*] I would like to speak to him before you go — only a few words, but alone. Please don't refuse me that. It's only to say good-bye.

JERNIGAN.

It's a violation of my duty, but I feel I can trust you.

[JERNIGAN *goes out.*

ISABEL.

What *can* we do? [*Enter* CAPTAIN MOWBRAY.] I'm so sure this is all a mistake. Can't you tell me? I'll keep your secret.

MOWBRAY.

It's best as it is.

ISABEL.

But if they send you to prison. Oh, think — [*She is overcome with emotion.*]

MOWBRAY.

They won't send me to prison. There'll be a trial, most likely, but I think I shall get off.

ISABEL.

Then you admit it's a mistake.

MOWBRAY.

[*Momentarily confused.*] I — I — You said yesterday you trusted me.

ISABEL.

More than any man.

MOWBRAY.

Then — trust me still.

ISABEL.

I do. But you leave me so in the dark. I thought you'd explain it to *me,* — just *me.* [*He turns silently away.*] If you can't — [*Giving vent to her emotion.*] Oh, I can't bear it. To see you taken away like a criminal, if they'd only take me instead of you! If only *I* could bear the shame we've somehow brought on you to-day — [*Falters.*] my wedding day. [*Breaks down.*]

MOWBRAY.

[*Comes towards her, speaking tenderly and sorrowfully.*] Yes, poor child, your wedding day, but brighter days will come, and soon you'll forget that your wedding bells never rang.

ISABEL.

[*Brokenly.*] It isn't *that* I care about.

MOWBRAY.

No. I know, but *I'd* pictured your wedding day so differently.

ISABEL.

You know why I married David, — you, only *you.* You know I don't regret it, and I think he's going to turn out well now. But I can't realise that we are married. We spoke a few hurried words in the Registry Office — that was all. It hasn't made any difference to me yet. And David isn't in danger and you are. I must place you first now. [*Seeing his emotion as she looks into his eyes.*] Do I make it harder for you?

MOWBRAY.

[*With exaltation.*] No — no —so much easier.

ISABEL.

[*Innocently.*] How can *I* make it easier?

MOWBRAY.

Because whatever my life is now — and it's likely to be lonely — I shall always remember that for one moment you placed me first in yours.

ISABEL.

[*Innocently, putting her face near to his.*] Will that make it easier?

MOWBRAY.

[*Looks into her face, then draws back suddenly.*] Don't tempt me. You know what I mean. I've wasted the best years of my life — an exile — working to grow rich — for you. And then — when I thought I'd won you — to see you snatched from me — by a boy. [*She turns away.*] Forgive me. Don't make me feel ashamed of myself. [*She gives him her hands.*] If ever we meet again we shall both be loyal to David. And if we never meet — perhaps the pain will grow less in time — and I shall be glad to think you know how sweet your memory will be to me. I shall often see your kind eyes smiling — and hear your voice, — Good-bye.

ISABEL.

Good-bye.

[ISABEL *goes out slowly, closing the door after her.* DAVID *enters suddenly from the garden. His face is drawn and white. He seems on the verge of nervous prostration.*

DAVID.

Frank!

MOWBRAY.

David!

DAVID.

You mustn't do this for me.

MOWBRAY.

Why are you here?

DAVID.

To give myself up.

MOWBRAY.

How did you hear about it?

DAVID.

The servant said you'd been arrested.

MOWBRAY.

But why did you come?

DAVID.

Because I'm not fit to be in the army. I'm not fit to look the other fellows in the face. I thought they could all see it in *my* face. Isn't it there? Can't everyone see it?

MOWBRAY.

[*Laying his hand firmly on* DAVID.] David, you've got to think of Isabel.

DAVID.

Isabel! [*Sinks into a chair sobbing.*]

MOWBRAY.

[*Firmly.*] Pull yourself together, man. She mustn't see this.

DAVID.

She's got to know the truth.

MOWBRAY.

She must never know it. Forget the past.

DAVID.

I can't.

MOWBRAY.

You must. Brand yourself, you dishonour her. Think what that means, some of her friends shunning her, some pitying her — all humiliating her. If you confess now, she will have to live in the glare of your crime. Don't bring her to that. Think man, think — Grip hold of yourself and think.

DAVID.

I can't let you suffer for me.

MOWBRAY.

Don't think of me. Think of the girl you married this morning. She placed all her life in your keeping. Oh, take care of it, take care of it.

DAVID.

It's too late.

MOWBRAY.

It's not too late. You're a boy yet. You've made a bad start, but you can get over that. Begin again, your life is before you. The past is only to warn you, not to make you despair. Begin again, say, "I *will* conquer," and you can. No man succeeds by accident. It's by faith and self-control, and hard work, and it's worth it. It's worth everything to be your own master and not your own slave. Begin again, at once, and don't delay. That's why people fail, because they put off making that first big effort. Make yours now. Be strong. [DAVID *breaks down.*] She mustn't see you like this, I'll detain her while you pull yourself together. Look forward, lad — there's always hope ahead. You repent, there's hope in that, and you're not going out alone; you're going to face the world with a true woman. And with youth, and hope and faith, and Isabel — why, damn it, you can triumph over everything.

[MOWBRAY *goes out.*

DAVID.

[*Hopelessly.*] The curse is always there in my mind and heart. I'm tainted — Oh! Isabel! [*Rises with determination.*] I won't bring her dishonour, I'll set her free. There's only one way — I'll do it — I'll do it. [*Goes to the*

writing-table, sits down, and writes a letter in feverish haste. His voice breaks as he says.] And now, good-bye — Isabel. Good-bye. [*Puts the letter in the envelope, addresses it.*] For Isabel.

[CHARLES *enters as if looking for someone.*

DAVID.

Who are you looking for?

CHARLES.

Miss Isabel, sir.

DAVID.

Here. [CHARLES *comes to* DAVID, *who hands him letter.*] Give her that — in five minutes.

CHARLES.

[*Takes the letter.*] I'll give it to her now, sir.

DAVID.

[*Angrily.*] Not now. Have you so sense?

CHARLES.

Beg pardon, sir. In five minutes. [*Turns to the door.*]

DAVID.

Charles. [CHARLES *comes to him.*] I didn't mean to speak angrily to you. I mean, — I don't want those to be my last words. Here —

[*Feels in his pockets, takes out some coins and gives them to* CHARLES.]

CHARLES.

[*Taking the money.*] Thank you, sir.

DAVID.

[*Puts his hand on* CHARLES' *shoulder as he speaks.*] Don't make a mess of your life, Charles.

[CHARLES *goes out and closes the door.* DAVID *takes a revolver from his pocket, examines it, then goes out into the garden. Enter* ISABEL *and* CAPTAIN MOWBRAY.

ISABEL.

I thought you said David was here.

MOWBRAY.

I left him here.

[ISABEL *rings the bell.*

ISABEL.

But why *should* he come back?

MOWBRAY.

He's awfully broken up about me.

ISABEL.

How could he know? It all happened after he left.

MOWBRAY.

He knew the suspicion was on me.

ISABEL.

[*As if struck by an inspiration.*] Oh! [*Goes quickly to* MOWBRAY.] Are you doing this to shield — anybody?

[CHARLES *enters, holding the letter.*

MOWBRAY.

Where is Mr. Cairn?

CHARLES.

He was here just now.

MOWBRAY.

Did he say anything about going away?

CHARLES.

No, sir.

ISABEL.

[*Noticing the letter in* CHARLES' *hand.*] What's that letter?

CHARLES.

He said I wasn't to give it you for five minutes. It must be five minutes now. [*Hands the letter to* ISABEL.]

[CHARLES *goes out.*

MOWBRAY.

[*Trying to stop her opening it.*] Don't read it!

ISABEL.

I must.

MOWBRAY.

No.

ISABEL.

Yes, I begin to see. [*Opens the letter and reads aloud.*] "I stole the necklace when you were all out yesterday afternoon — If you don't believe this, I dare say you can find out at the station what train I came by — when I came to the house about three o'clock, the gardener saw me." [*Her face expresses horror. Then she looks up and says firmly.*] They must all see this.

MOWBRAY.

No, destroy it.

ISABEL.

Oh, how could he let you take it on yourself?

MOWBRAY.

I made him do it. I shall get off all right, but he wouldn't. He'd be ruined. [*Trying to take the letter from her.*] Destroy it.

ISABEL.

Wait. There's more yet. [*Turns over the page and reads.*] "Frank loves you — " [*Stops short, reading the rest to herself, her horror giving way to alarm.*] Oh! [*Drops the letter.*]

[MOWBRAY *picks it up and reads it.*

MOWBRAY.

"Frank loves you. I hope you will marry him some day. When you get this letter you will be free, so it will be no use to try and stop me. I know now that you will only find happiness after my death." [*Runs to the window.* JERNIGAN *meets* MOWBRAY *at the window and whispers to him.*] Dead!! [JERNIGAN *disappears.*] Oh, poor David!

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